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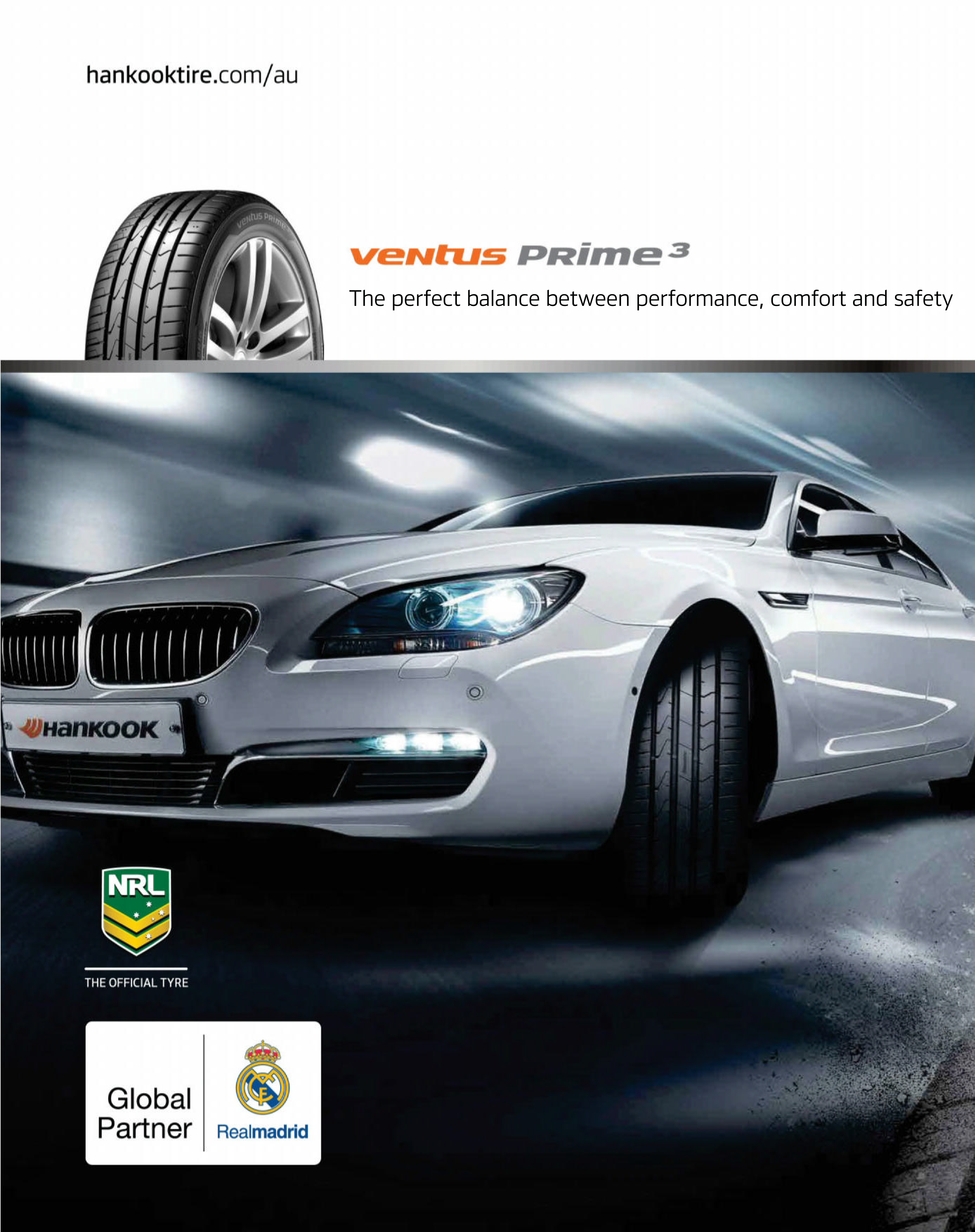
11 HELL-RAISERS, **5** FIERCE DAYS... **1** NEW KING!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1898

First moon tyres
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transporter by Goodyear

1971

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commercial aircraft

1983

First to win 368 F1
Grand Prix Races

1998

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2017

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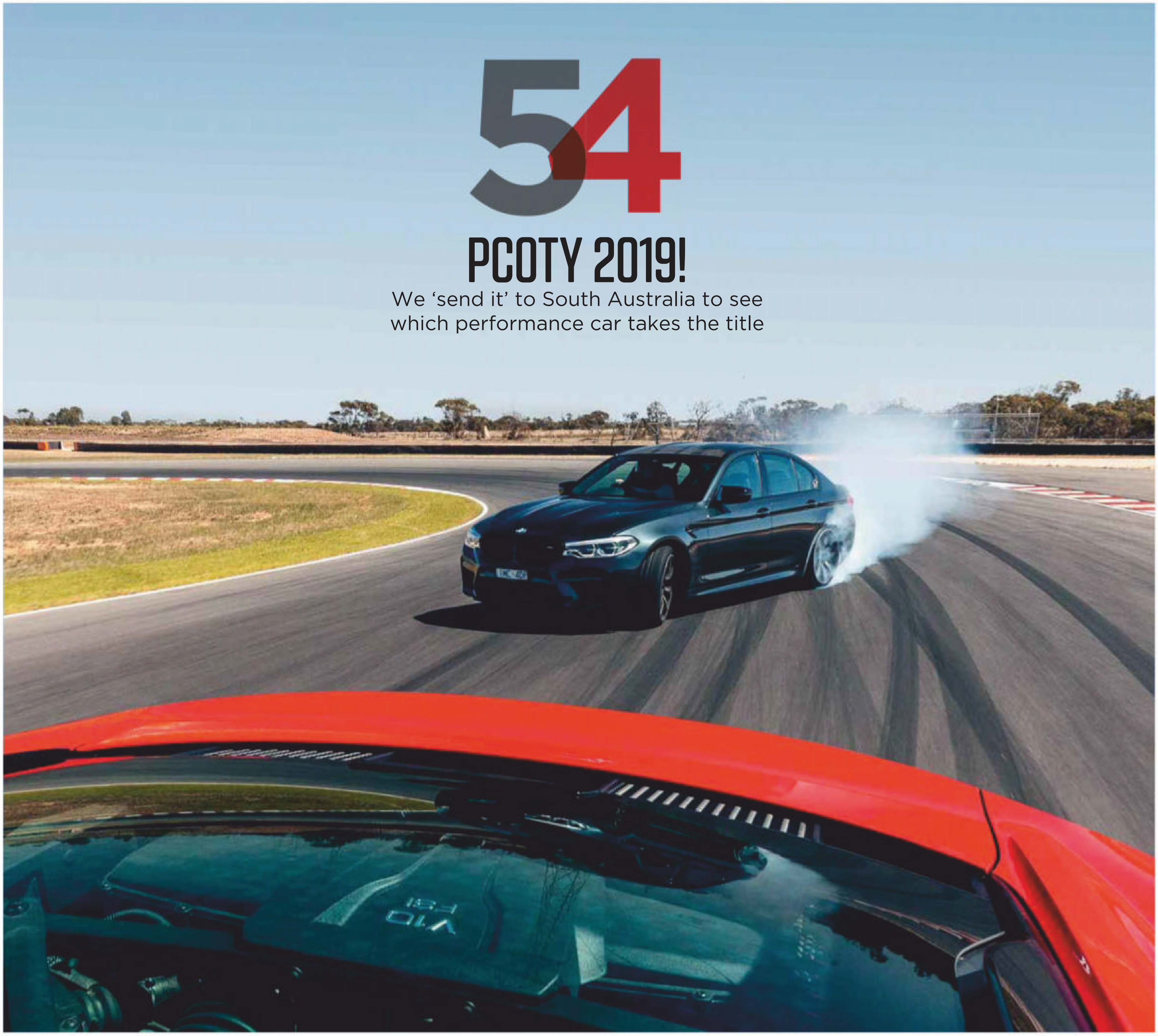

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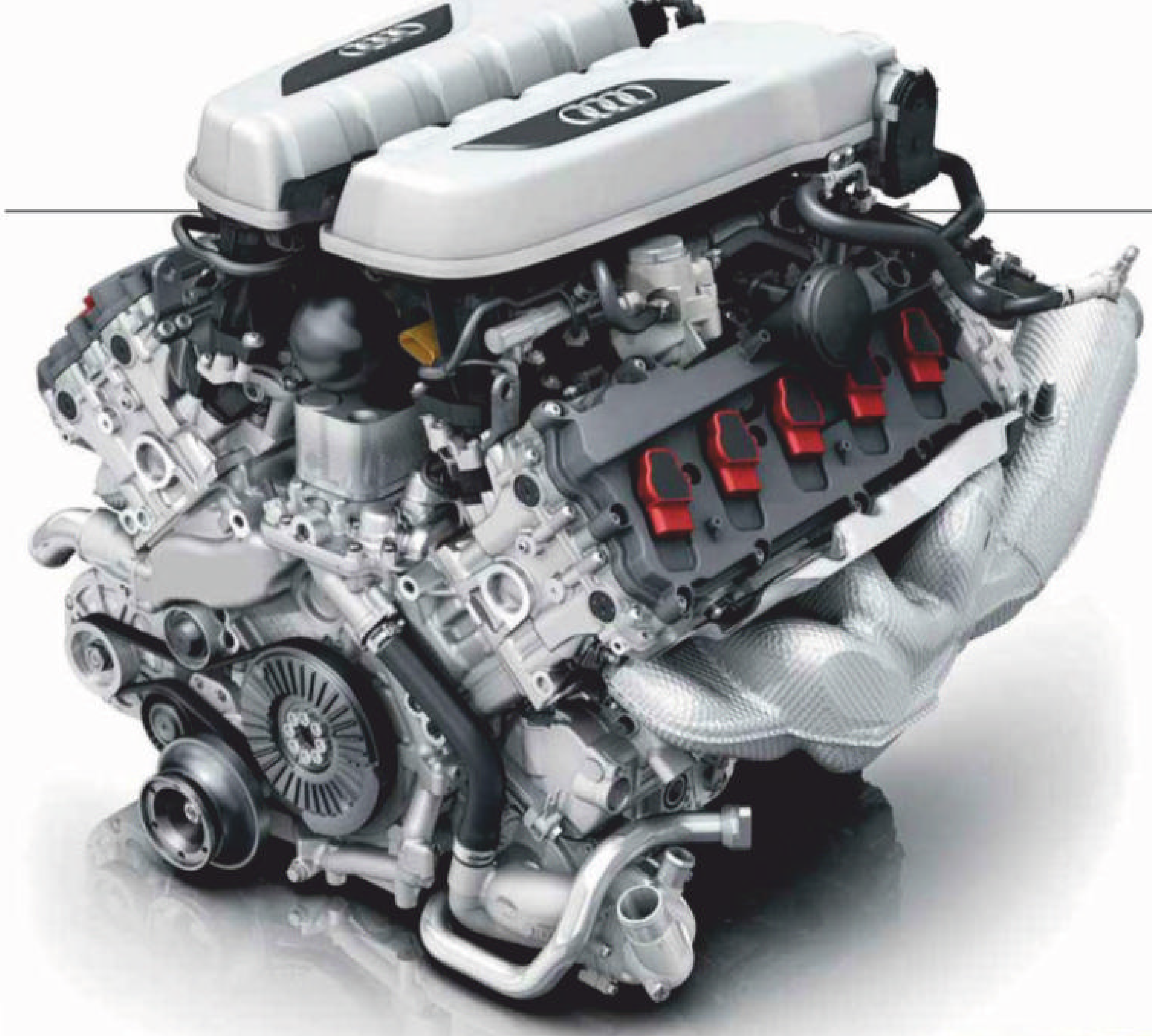
PCOTY 2019!
We 'send it' to South Australia to see which performance car takes the title



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I WASN'T EXPECTING TO END UP IN HOSPITAL DURING PERFORMANCE CAR OF THE YEAR, BUT THERE I WAS...

Dylan Campbell

STILL A BIT stunned, my face twitching, I reached up under my glasses to feel a bit of wetness. Blood. A lot of it.

"Err, I'll be right back," I said to the barista at The Bend Motorsport Park, as I rushed off to the men's room to do god knows what. Swab my bleeding eyebrow with very unsterilised bits of toilet paper, presumably.

Moments earlier I had just walked, full noise, into the world's cleanest, most unstickered glass wall outside the brand new cafe upstairs at The Bend. My mind was elsewhere – it was thinking braking and turning points, the trickier bits of The Bend's 3.41km West Circuit, as I took stock of whether or not I had enough match fitness and simple alertness (and possibly skill) to strap myself into a 515kW rear-drive Porsche with its engine in physically the wrong place. Hence the barista visit.

But suddenly the long list of priorities for *MOTOR*'s 2019 Performance Car of the Year, in my mind – the testing, photography, videography, logistics, many moving parts – were instantly subordinated by a brand new, very urgent task. Get myself to hospital.

"You're in charge now," I said to Associate Editor Newman who had a "what? Why?" look all over his face. "I've just walked into a glass wall in the cafe upstairs, my glasses are, it turns out, quite unexpectedly sharp, and the ambulance guy says I should get myself to the emergency department in Murray Bridge, 25 minutes up the road, to get probably stitches."

Before this point, I had somehow managed to make the bleeding stop but there was a very gnarly gash under my eyebrow. "You did what?" quizzed Morley. And then the others. "I've gotta go".

The drive to Murray Bridge in our Ford Escape support car (possibly someone else should have driven me in hindsight) was an odd one, not just because it was not even the slightest bit on the radar five minutes earlier. I was supposed to be driving a Porsche 911 GT2 RS, or an Audi R8 RWS, or BMW M5 Competition, on a beautiful new racetrack, at 250km/h.

"You should have made up that you crashed a car or something," said the nurse as she swabbed my wound, laughing that I had basically walked into a wall. The irony of receiving such an injury on a day where I was driving some of the fastest road cars in the world beyond their limits, on a track – truly very dangerous activity – was not lost on me.

The doc in Murray Bridge gave me a local and stitched me up. "You probably shouldn't drive on the track any more today," he said, and excitement and surrealism of the whole thing turned to glumness. I realised I might not get to drive some of the faster cars on track, at Performance Car of the Year, a day that I, and the *MOTOR* crew, use as motivation to get us through hundreds upon hundreds of hours driving a desk.

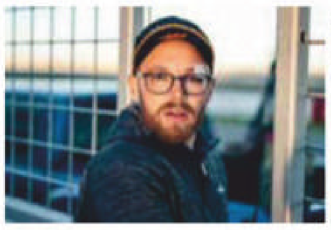
I got myself back to The Bend in time to coordinate, with snapper Ellen Dewar, the sunset group shot, my face patched up, which then became the evening's entertainment as everyone else watched on. "We have to check if there's a CCTV camera up there," laughed The Bend guys, and me with them, sort of, as I wondered if my profile as Editor of *MOTOR* was about to be trumped by me, the YouTube viral video.

It was all okay in the end, I managed to fulfil my duties as a judge on Performance Car of the Year. But it was just another unexpected turn at our 2019 instalment – 11 superb cars, five dream days – the rest of which you can read from p54. Enjoy.

DC

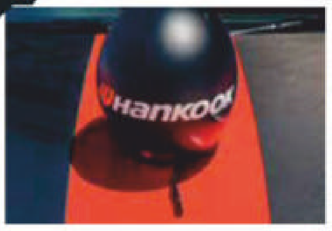
In the MADHOUSE

05
O TA ES
THIS MONTH
AT *MOTOR*



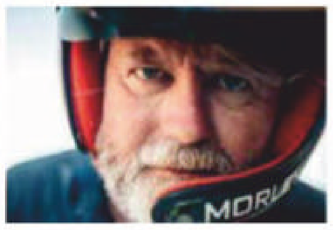
1. Seeing stars? The Bend claims a casualty in DC at PCOTY 2019, but it wasn't a gravel trap...

2. Josh pursues the perfect bottle flip while Chris teaches us what the kids are up to in 2019



3. What's red, and black, and makes you feel like you're getting fired out of a cannon?

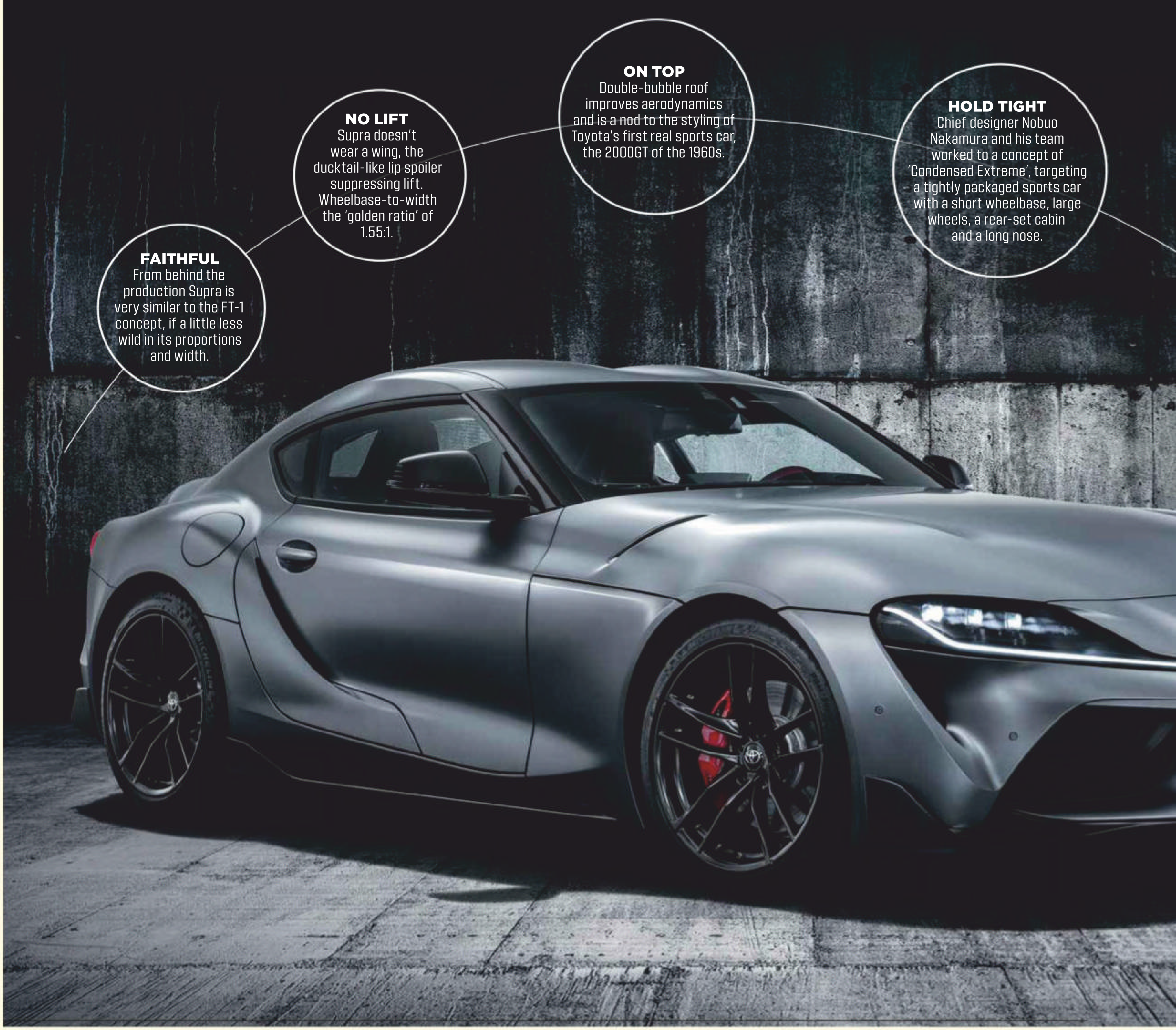
4. It doesn't have to be a GT2 RS to make Scott happy, just take him to the car wash! It's cheaper



5. Morley delivered the line of the PCOTY week: "I don't know what BDE is, but I've got it". Look it up...

Pace Notes

IF IT HAPPENED THIS MONTH, IT'S IN HERE

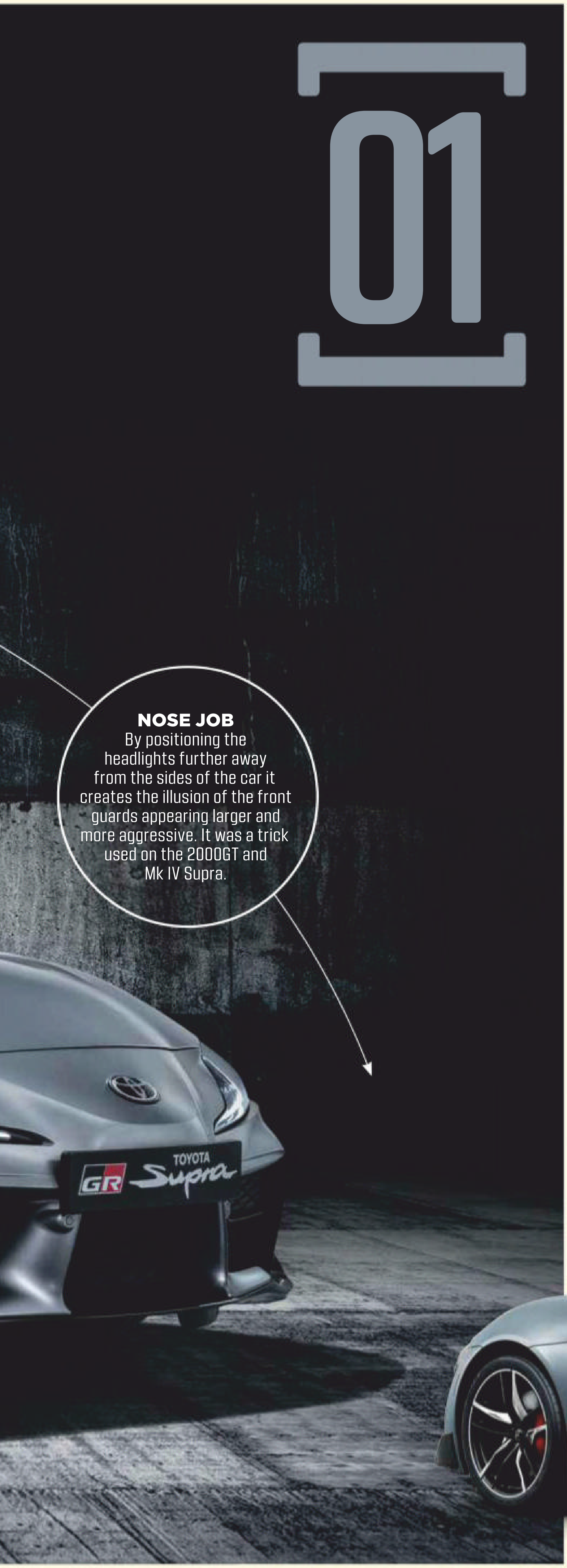


ON TOP
Double-bubble roof improves aerodynamics and is a nod to the styling of Toyota's first real sports car, the 2000GT of the 1960s.

NO LIFT
Supra doesn't wear a wing, the ducktail-like lip spoiler suppressing lift. Wheelbase-to-width the 'golden ratio' of 1.55:1.

HOLD TIGHT
Chief designer Nobuo Nakamura and his team worked to a concept of 'Condensed Extreme', targeting a tightly packaged sports car with a short wheelbase, large wheels, a rear-set cabin and a long nose.

FAITHFUL
From behind the production Supra is very similar to the FT-1 concept, if a little less wild in its proportions and width.



NOSE JOB
By positioning the headlights further away from the sides of the car it creates the illusion of the front guards appearing larger and more aggressive. It was a trick used on the 2000GT and Mk IV Supra.

NEW SUPRA!

STOP, PRESS! Toyota's über-coupe revealed

THE FIFTH-GENERATION Toyota Supra has made its long-awaited debut at the 2019 Detroit Auto Show. The public reveal brought to an end one of the most protracted teaser campaigns of recent years, which began five years ago with the unveiling of the Toyota FT-1 Concept at the 2014 Detroit show.

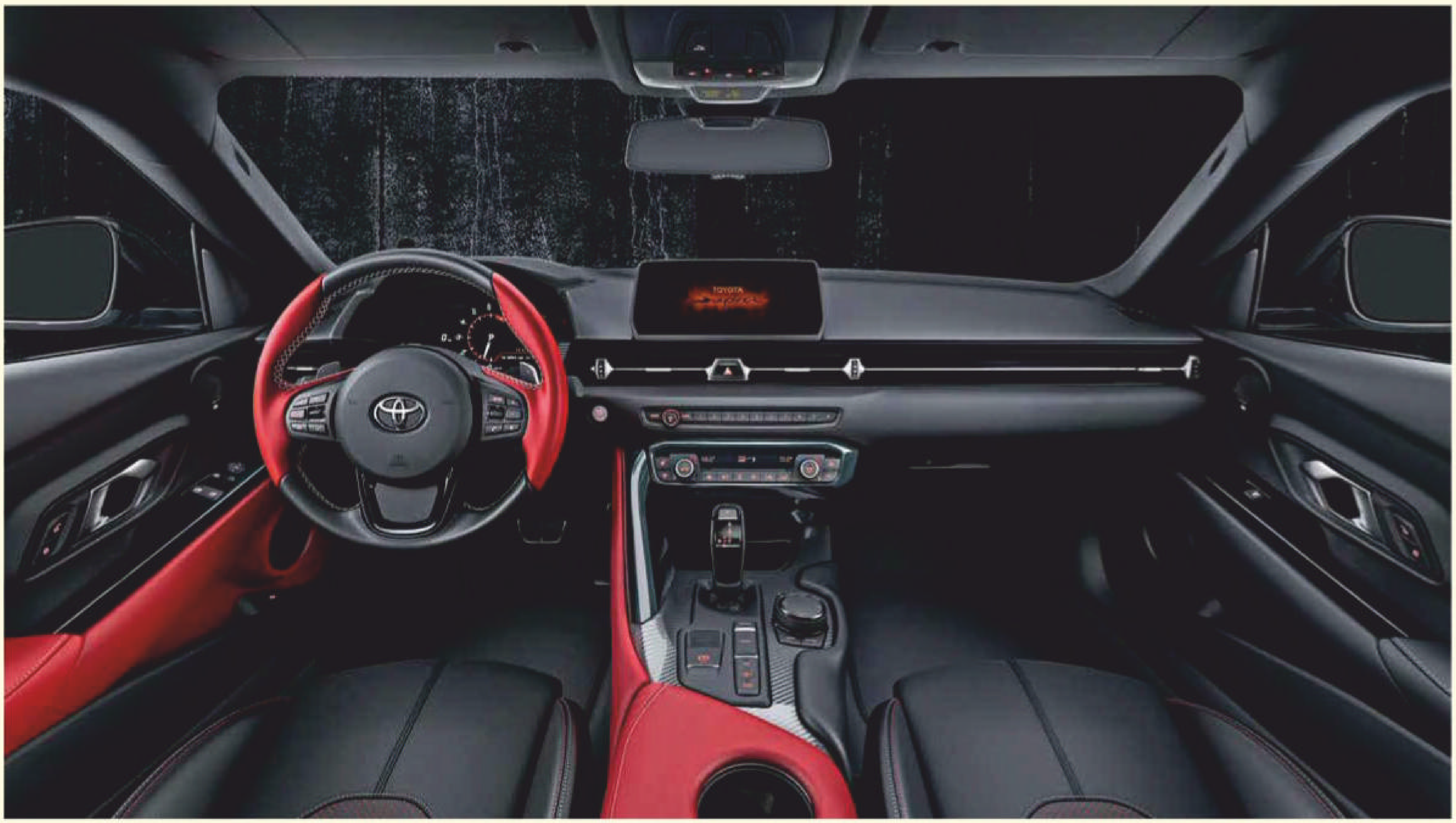
In fact, the new Supra's basic silhouette goes back much further, to the FT-HS concept that appeared at Detroit in 2007. The GFC quickly killed that program, however, the FT-1 germinated the seed sown by the FT-HS. The radical styling of the FT-1, penned by Toyota's forward-thinking California-based design centre, has been understandably toned down for production, but it remains remarkably close to the show-stopping concept.

The new Supra would not exist without the passion of Toyota President Akio Toyoda. In a statement, Toyoda said: "I spent countless hours driving an old Supra at the Nurburgring to become a master driver. Supra is like an old friend that holds a special place in my heart. So even though Toyota had no plans to make a new Supra, just like a lot of other die-hard fans around the world, I secretly wanted to make it happen."

Also key to the project's viability was the involvement of BMW. The Mk V Supra, codenamed A90, is twinned with the new Z4, the two cars sharing much of their DNA. BMW and Toyota worked together for around two years to finalise the hard points and mechanical specification before the design teams went their separate ways to style their respective sports cars. BMW's design boss, Adrian Van Hooydonk, told UK outlet *Top Gear,* "We immediately agreed on the hard points and what we want in terms of proportions."

Coincidence or not, Toyota's desired layout was eerily similar to that of the Mk IV Supra. The iconic JZA80 measured 4516mm long, 1811mm wide and 1265mm tall with a 2550mm wheelbase. Its successor is 4380mm long, 1865mm wide, 1295mm tall and has a 2470mm wheelbase. At 1520kg, that undercuts the JZA80 by just 6kg.

What it also shares with its predecessor is a 3.0-litre turbocharged straight six under the bonnet. BMW's new-generation B58 engine from its various M40i models endows the Supra with 250kW from 5000-6500rpm and 500Nm from 1600-4500rpm thanks to its twin-scroll turbocharger and 11.0:1 compression ratio.



Launch control catapults the Supra to 100km/h in a claimed 4.3sec, 0.2sec quicker than the identically powered Z4.

Unlike the venerated 2JZ and its perfectly square bore/stroke ratio (its 86.0 x 86.0mm measurements are identical to the 86's FA20), the short-stroke B58 uses a 94.6mm bore and 82.0mm stroke to rev keenly to 7000rpm. It's attached to a close-ratio eight-speed ZF automatic gearbox, with its speeds in each gear being 54km/h (1st), 84km/h (2nd), 130km/h (3rd), 164km/h (4th) and 215km/h (5th). The 250km/h top speed is reached at 6200rpm in sixth and 5100rpm in seventh, while cruising at its electronically limited v-max in eighth requires just 3970rpm. Good for those autobahn blasts.

The gearbox is shift-by-wire (no mechanical link) and an electronically controlled limited-slip differential will be standard on Aussie Supras, able to transfer between zero and 100 per cent of the drive to either rear wheel thanks to its multi-plate clutches.

Also standard on local Supras will be 19-inch wheels. Measuring 9.0 inches wide front and 10.0 inches rear, they're wrapped in Michelin Pilot Super Sports 255/35 up front and 275/35 at the rear. The Supra was tested extensively at the Nurburgring, where it's rumoured to be capable of a 7min40sec lap time. However, chief engineer, Tetsuya Tada, the man responsible for the 86, says: "We set out to create a pure sports car that would attain the ultimate in the fun of driving. Rather than working towards lap times, we emphasised the degree to which driving could be felt to be fun."

Toyota claims the A90's steel and aluminium bodyshell has greater structural rigidity than the carbon construction Lexus LFA, while the centre of gravity is lower than an 86 and the weight distribution a perfect 50:50 front-to-rear. Electrically assisted power steering controls a MacPherson strut front end with double-joint springs, the rear is a five-link setup and there are adaptive dampers at both ends. Aluminium control arms reduce unsprung weight. A high-performance brake package will also appear as standard on Aussie Supras.

Inside is a curious mix of Toyota and BMW, the full-width air vent sandwiched between the iDrive infotainment system, HVAC controls and gear selector from the Z4. Likewise the Toyota-badged steering wheel inset with BMW buttons. The instrument display is taken care of by an 8.8-inch TFT display and a full-colour head-up display is standard.

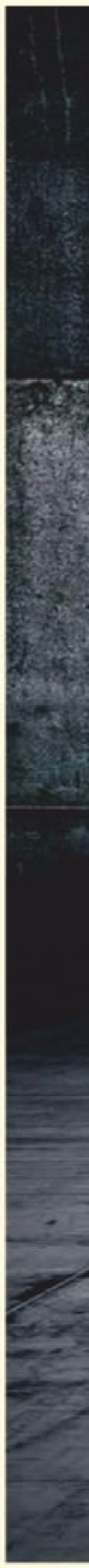
↑

TOP
Interior a strange fusion of Japanese and German, like wasabi currywurst. Design is Toyota, but everything you interact with is BMW

ABOVE
B58 3.0-litre turbo six produces 250kW/500Nm in the Supra, as it does in BMW's new Z4 M40i

Whether or not customers will care about the shared switchgear may depend on the price.

At the time of writing, this crucial piece of information is unknown. Toyota Australia will only say that local cars will have a high specification level and that a mere 300 cars will be sent our way from the plant in Graz, Austria, in the first 12 months. If the mechanically identical BMW Z4 M40i's Aussie ask of $124,900 is anything to go by, a price tag of less than six figures may be unlikely, which would put the Supra head-to-head with the likes of the BMW M2 Competition, Porsche Cayman and Alpine A110. Let's hope it's worth the wait. – *SN*



TOYOTA
Supra
TOYOTA
GR Supra
GR

KNOW YOUR SUPRAS: A HISTORY

40 years of six-cylinder, rear-drive Toyota sports cars

A40/A50 Dubbed the Celica Supra, this Datsun Z-car competitor first appeared in 1978 powered by a trio of inline six-cylinder engines.

A60 The oh-so-'80s A60 launched in Australia in 1983 powered by a 2.8-litre six-pot103kW/226Nm sent through an LSD for rear-drive fun.

A70 The first dedicated Supra arrived in 1986, followed a year later by the 173kW Turbo. JZA70 appeared in 1992 with 206kW 1JZ-GTE.

A80 The daddy. Introduced in 1993, the JZA80 became a sensation thanks to the almost unlimited tuning potential of its 2JZ-GTE engine.

02

GT500 ATTACKS

HOLY TYRE SMOKES! Ford cooks up mental 522kW-plus Shelby

FORD HAS BLOWN the Mustang into the realms of supercar performance with the release of its eagerly anticipated supercharged Shelby GT500.

Snuck under its bulging bonnet is the GT350's 5.2-litre Voodoo V8, with a cross-plane crank, to handle the delivery from a 2.65-litre supercharger. It's strengthened to withstand earth-crumbling power, with longer cylinder head bolts and new seals in the block.

It backs onto a new Tremec seven-speed dual-clutch transmission that drives a carbon-fibre propshaft.

The new transmission, promised to shift gears in less than 100 milliseconds, also has a line-lock function and rpm-selectable launch control starts.

Exact performance figures are being withheld to build suspense towards its launch late this year, but Ford Performance claims it'll produce more than 522kW, accelerate to 97km/h from rest in around 3.5 seconds and run 10-second quarter-mile times.

For perspective, the Ford GT supercar develops 482kW/746Nm from its 3.5-litre twin-turbo V6. And Dodge claims 10.8sec quarter miles for its 594kW Challenger Hellcat Redeye Widebody.

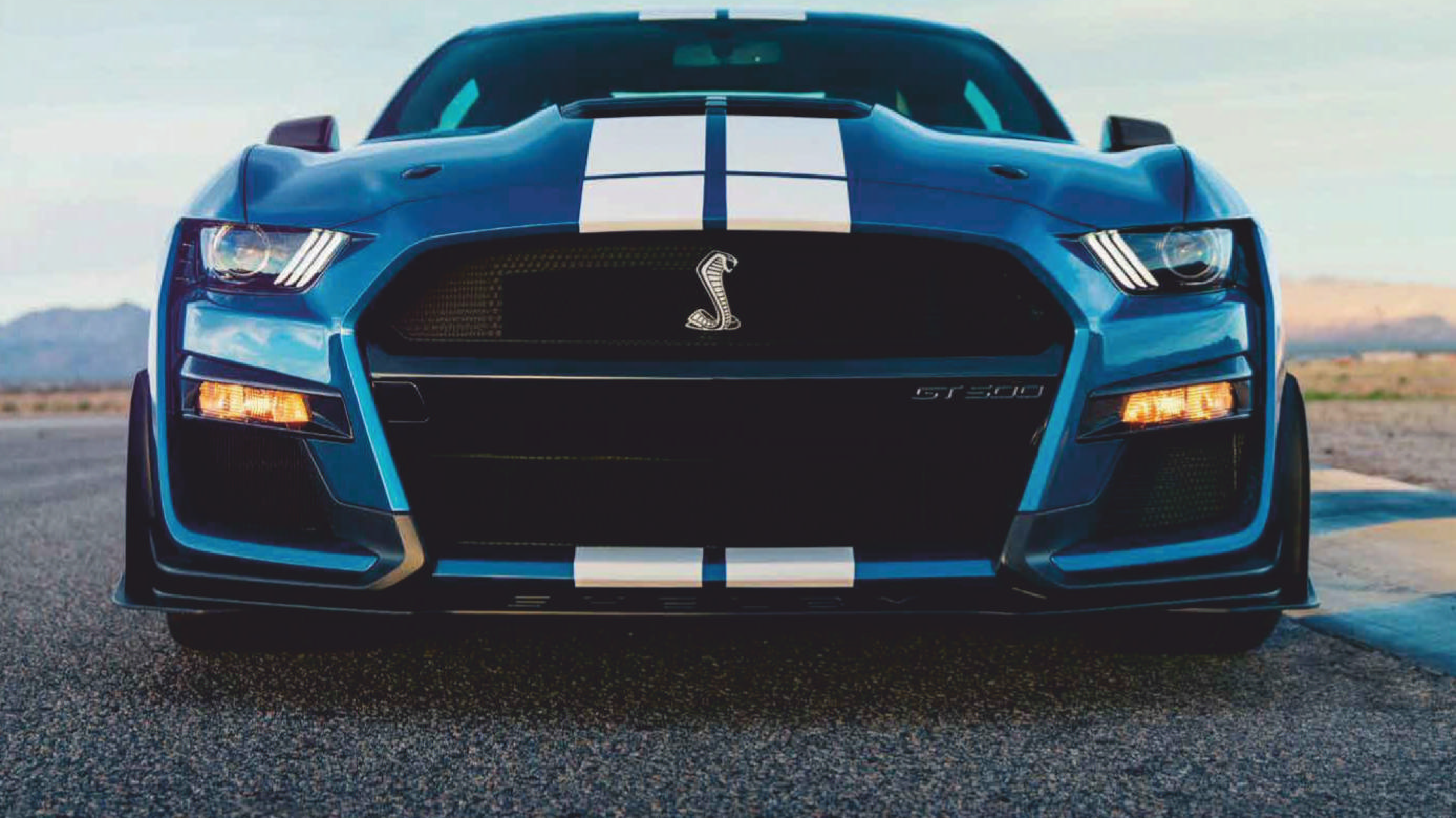
Lighter springs coil around new generation MagneRide adaptive dampers. They work with revised GT350 suspension geometry and a new electronic power steering unit to control custom Michelin Pilot Sport 4S tyres.

The standard car, without options, rolls on 20-inch wheels that are 11 inches wide at the front and 11.5 inches at the rear. Up front stronger Brembo six-piston calipers clamp 420mm two-piece brake rotors.

With the GT500 only to be produced in left-hand drive (booo), Ford Australia confirmed to *MOTOR* no plans to bring this super 'Stang Down Under. However, local firm Mustang Motorsport will locally import, comply and convert a select run. Exact pricing and specification will follow once Ford confirms such details, as well as an expected Q3 launch. – *LC*

BELOW
Openings in the front-end have doubled to improve airflow by 50 per cent. There are six heat exchangers carried in its snout, along with an "active" baffle oil pan at the bottom of its V8

RIGHT
A full interior, with suede door inserts and carbon trim, features in all but carbon fibre track pack cars



Wider front fenders feature with a composite rear diffuser. Americans can boost handling with a package that adds adjustable strut top mounts and a spoiler with gurney flap

A carbon fibre track pack adds a splitter, side planes and adjustable rear wing, along with CF wheels that are 0.5 inches wider at the rear and wrapped in Cup 2 rubber

03 ULTIMATE REX!

SUPER SCOOBY! Subaru builds 254kW widebody WRX STI

SUBARU HAS SHOCKED its aging WRX STI back into life with the release of its new S209 limited edition (for, sadly, the US only). And the all-paw brawler comes out swinging with the most powerful engine STI has put in a road-going model.

Starting with the 2.5-litre boxer four in the standard WRX STI, it's upgraded internally with forged pistons and connecting rods. On top of the combustion chamber its exhaust valve springs are stronger, while the fuel system has been beefed up with new injectors and fuel pump.

A larger HKS-developed turbocharger sucks through a new intake system comprising air filter, intake tract and box. Boost pressure is up from 16.2psi to 18psi and controlled by a new ECU tune. Meanwhile, exhaust gases are piped through new mufflers and larger 101mm exhaust tips that promise a growl just as aggressive as its bite.

Speaking of, the total power figure stands at an "estimated" 254kW, claims Subaru, or 33kW healthier than the standard car. There's no mention of how the car's maximum torque figure of 407Nm at 4000rpm has been affected, except that it's increased mid-range torque by 10 per cent at 3600rpm. A new manually operated intercooler water spray system will keep outputs consistent on hot days.

Grunt is channelled through the car's standard close-ratio six-speed transmission with a "performance clutch". Thanks to a significant chassis transformation, it grips into the tarmac via specially developed tyres, Dunlop SP Sport Maxx GT600As.

At 265mm wide, they're 20mm wider than standard items and have forced engineers to broaden the car by 43.2mm at each end. They're said to aid cooling and cut drag while the aero package also adds an exclusive front splitter, bumper winglets and a new dry-carbon rear spoiler.

Grip is further enhanced by custom

TOP RIGHT
New brake pads add to its six-piston and two-piston Brembo calipers

BELOW RIGHT
"Pillow-ball" braces maintain ride quality while improving cornering grip

FAR RIGHT
Alcantara features on the centre armrest and steering wheel rim for a racy feel

Bilstein shocks, stiffer springs and "pillow-ball" style lateral suspension links front and rear. They're complemented by pillow ball braces underneath its bodyshell and across its front struts.

Visual upgrades to the exterior continue with a dry-carbon roof and exclusive BBS 19 by 9.0-inch lightweight alloys. Buyers can order an S209 in either Crystal White with gold wheels, or Blue Pearl with grey wheels.

But Aussies will need to holster their cheque books. The S209 succeeds limited edition S-line models (see sidebar) as the first one sold in, and built exclusively for, America. In fact, it's the first to be offered outside Japan. Only 200 will be made in Kiryu, two hours north of Tokyo.

We understand Subaru's special treatment of America with the S209 is due to its favourable market share of sales and higher grade fuel availability. But you won't see one on American roads until late this year and Subaru hasn't yet announced how much it'll hit buyers in the pocket. Either way, consider us jealous. – *LC*

SIX STI S-LINE SPECIALS

2017

S208
Precursor to the S209 uses 2.0 litre with 242kW/432Nm and 8000rpm

2011

Impreza S206
Only 235kW/431Nm, but focus is on response with new twin-scroll turbo

2008

Legacy S402
S-Line treatment finds the Legacy with 210kW/392Nm 2.5-litre boxer four

2004

Impreza S203
Carbon fibre bucket seats and 235kW/422Nm make it sought after

2002

Impreza S202 STI
Track-spec wing, tasty alloys and 235kW/384Nm set a trend

2000

Impreza S201 STI
Outrageous aero was matched by its power, pegged at 221kW/353Nm

RC F STRIPS OFF

V8 TRACK SPECIAL! Lexus adds lightness to atmo rear-drive coupe

A NEW LIGHTWEIGHT track-hungry Lexus RC F has been revealed alongside an updated base model. Called the, erm, Track Edition, the halo variant slashes 65kg from the car's normal kerb weight and benefits from a host of revisions to the standard car.

Lexus says 23kg is shed from its wheels and brakes that are now light BBS 19-inch alloys with Brembo carbon-ceramics. Further kilograms drop from the carbon-fibre parts like its roof, rear seat partition, bonnet, front air dam and rear fixed wing which replaces the active unit. Its front "bumper reinforcement" is also carbon. The final party piece is a unique titanium muffler.

The Track Edition enhances the standard RC F's package that has new hollow axles and stiffer rear suspension bushings. Aluminium "toe-control brackets and upper suspension support brackets" also feature with new Michelin Pilot Sport 4S tyres.

Stronger steering rack and engine mounts sit underneath its 5.0-litre V8. Carrying over 351kW/530Nm, it now opens its secondary intake path at 2800rpm instead of 3600rpm. With launch control and an eight-speed automatic, Lexus claims 0-100km/h is completed in "around four seconds", but it's unclear how much better it'll be than the car's current 4.5-second claim.

Both variants will land this May, and will be distinguished by new tail-lights, headlights and front splitter.

Further details on them, including local pricing, will be confirmed closer to its launch date. – *LC*

ABOVE
The RC F Track Edition introduces an exclusive matte grey colour

↑

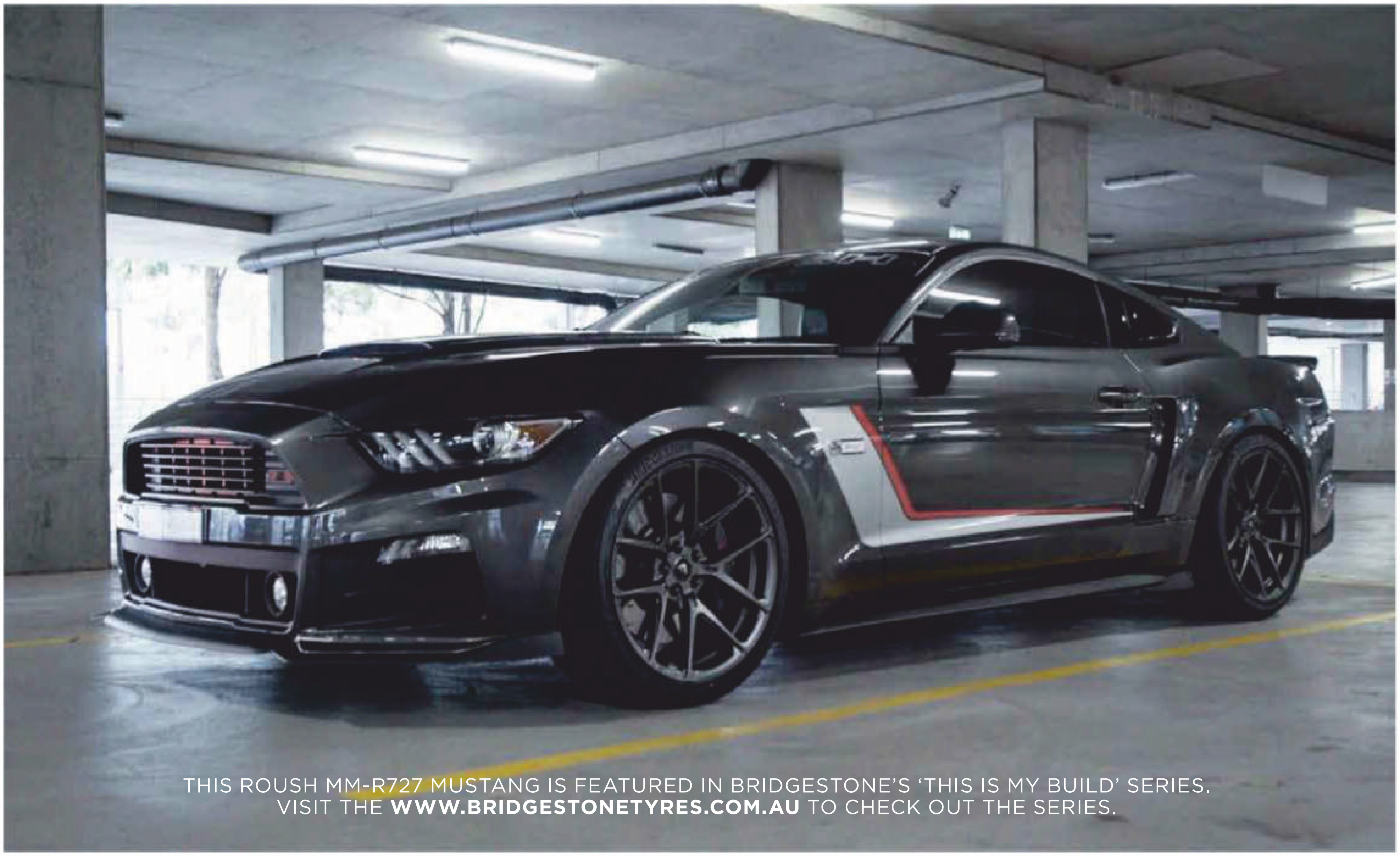
BRABHAM GOES STREET-LEGAL

MAYBE WE should have guessed this was coming, but a recent announcement from Brabham has revealed there's enough demand for a road-legal conversion option for the BT62 supercar.

In a seemingly reluctant press statement, David Brabham said, "This isn't a car designed for the road. With that said, it's clear some customers are keen to have a road-compliant option with their BT62, particularly to drive to and from the track."

The process is currently available for UK buyers, but is being developed for Australia and other markets also.

It retains 522kW from its 5.2-litre atmo V8, but the implication from Brabham is that it'll no longer have the same track capability and pack extra heft. Brabham for PCOTY 2020? – *CT*



THIS ROUSH MM-R727 MUSTANG IS FEATURED IN BRIDGESTONE'S 'THIS IS MY BUILD' SERIES. VISIT THE **WWW.BRIDGESTONETYRES.COM.AU** TO CHECK OUT THE SERIES.

PROMINENT PONY

How to make a Mustang stand out from the rest of the herd

THE MUSTANG HAS always been a desirable nameplate and, until recently, modern Mustangs have stood out on Australian roads.

However, when it was announced as a core part of Ford's range, it left some searching for new ways ensure their Pony still turned heads.

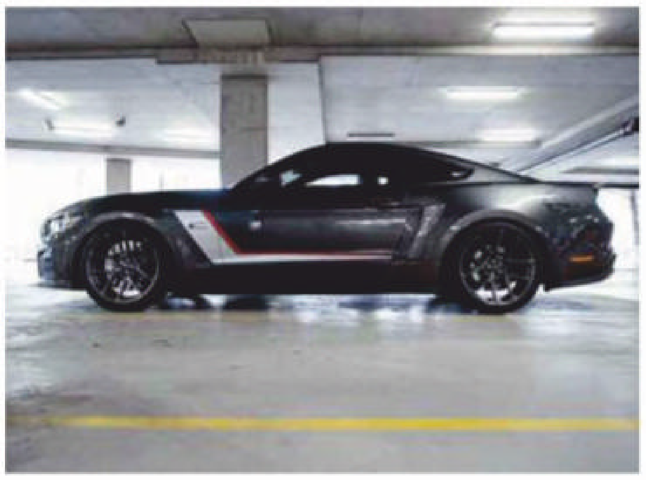
While there are no shortage of go-fast parts on offer for the Mustang, there are few that compare to the full treatment of a Roush MM-R727: turning the wick up from of the stock 5.0-litre's 306kW to a staggering 543kW courtesy of an upgraded stage-two supercharger kit and exhaust system.

Of course with so much extra grunt, handling upgrades are a must with the Roush package including fully adjustable Shockworks handling kit and upgraded slotted rotors to complement the six-pot Brembo calipers and a set of Bridgestone's Potenza S007A tyres to put the extra power to road.

Potenza S007A was introduced as Bridgestone's flagship performance tyre when it launched. With improvements to responsiveness, new levels of stability for both every day and high-speed applications, heightened grip and corning ability, improved braking capabilities and increased wear life compared to previous generation tyres, the S007A is ideal for high-end performance cars and modified muscle cars alike.

Just as the Roush MM-R727 pack has proven as the ideal way for this Mustang owner to turn heads, Bridgestone's Potenza S007A is proving itself as a reliable performance tyre for purists and tuners.

BELOW Bridgestone Potenza S007As ensure this Pony can get its upgraded power to the ground



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theTribe

WIN THIS NEXT MONTH! MOTOR MAGAZINE PRIZE PACK

Letter of the Month winner Lee will be ogling a brilliantly detailed Alpine A110-50 model and filling his pockets with an extra $200. Next month, our pack includes $200 cash prize, 12-month *MOTOR* subscription and a limited edition replica half-scale Warren Luff helmet. We award ideas, opinions, prose and originality, so get typing!

19
FEBRUARY
WINNER
LETTER of the MONTH

SUPER EFFORT ON SUPRA

THE MOST topical and anticipated new car in recent times, the A90 'Toyota' Supra, has been officially revealed. However, there is strong debate on whether the A90 is in fact a 'real' Toyota.

On the 'for' side, it's a two-door, rear-drive, inline-six sports car, harking to the Supras of yesteryear. Even the script of the badge on it closely resembles that of the famous Mk IV version. On paper this appears to be the perfect successor *Fast & Furious* fans have been waiting for.

But the naysayers will point out the fifth generation has a BMW drivetrain and interior, and the chassis was co-developed with the German marque, rather than a car that has been uniquely designed and developed by Toyota itself (like previous generations).

Further they argue it is over styled and doesn't have the clean lines of the originals, doesn't have a manual transmission option (for now at least) and will not even be made in Japan!

Although I say that if it takes a joint effort with BMW to bring back a classic badge, then why not? In the current automotive landscape dominated by SUVs, dual-cab pick-ups and electrification, I think we should be thankful that a new Supra exists at all. And from the prices quoted (in the US), it may be accessible for many car enthusiasts.

The real test of its success, though, will be how it drives (which I assume not many have done so yet), and having been tuned by Tetsuya Tada, it's unlikely to disappoint. I'm sure you guys will have the drive impression details in the not-too-distant future...

Lee-Ming Au, via email

Our thoughts almost exactly mirror yours, Lee. People are getting very upset about the new Supra; seems weird to be angry that a car company has released a new sports car, circumstances aside.

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IT'S MINE
OWNER'S Ride

Andrew Dove

Porsche Cayman | 2.7-litre flat six, 180kW/273Nm
ODO 140,000KM | OWNED FOR 6.0 YEARS

WHY DOES THE CAYMAN IMPRESS YOUR CLIENTS? I'm a tailor, so it's almost like you've earned this car, it's not a corporate handout, you had to go out and earn the money to get a hold of that car and that's a justification that maybe you're not a knob. Or, you are a knob that can earn money, and if you can earn money, that means you might know what you're doing.

BUT THAT'S NOT WHY YOU OWN ONE. If you do get it on the Reefton Spur the thing just handles and comes alive. The whole thing comes together on a whole. You can put it through a tight set of bends with negative cambers and it just stays really composed and feels very high quality. If you chuck it in a tight corner in third or second gear you can get a little bit of oversteer. You can't hang the back out, but you feel the rear tyres squirming as you accelerate.

PLANS FOR IT? When I bought it, it was $30K less than the S for the same year. And I was shopping for a $50K car. There's nothing in that price bracket, that I can think of, that comes close to this car. The Toyota 86 is a nice car, but it's not a Porsche. I'm never going to sell it. I'd maybe get an S. But I don't plan to.

REALLY? In the Porsche world, you're always going to be able to get a Cayman for half the money [of a 911], which is almost just as good in terms of performance and handling. The Alpine A110 is exciting but has the wrong gearbox. The Elise would be great but they're just too hardcore.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR PREVIOUS CARS. I had a BMW 318is, the one with the twin round headlights, to me it was a baby M3. So that was great fun. I had a Vauxhall Astra GTE 1.8. I lived in Spain and drove that everywhere. The roads across some of Europe in the '90s had no speed enforcement. You're pushing your luck, but that was part of the fun.

MIGHTY, OR MOUSE?

I found an anomaly in the October 2018 issue of the magazine regarding the feature on the new 2.0-litre MX-5.

Even with a favourable power-to-weight ratio, how does a small bump in power (17kW) and torque (5Nm) help it complete the quarter mile in 14.5-odd seconds? How does an extra 17kW/5Nm knock off about 0.5sec from the 0-400m time? Other publications have touted the old 118kW MX-5 to be a 15sec car. A 14.5sec quarter mile from a naturally aspirated engine (even in a light shell) seems far-fetched. Even with a professional driver, the best possible octane fuel, it doesn't put the new MX-5 on par with boosted cars.

To put this into perspective, a 1995 BMW E36 M3 (236kW) did about 14.5sec across the quarter mile, so does a 221kW Nissan 350Z. Modern hot hatches like the 213kW Audi S3 manual and a VW Golf GTI (DSG) will do 14s. Even a Honda S2000 (177kW), with a much more high tech engine and gearbox, will roughly do high 14.

Anonymous, via mail

We got a 14.68sec from the 118kW 2.0 MX-5 at Winton, Bang For Your Bucks 2016. As for comparisons to the older cars, there are lots of variables to consider but an important one is that performance tyres have come a very, very long way in the last 25 years.

GO FIGURE

In the Jaguar XJR feature in The Annual 2018 issue you write "*600 horsepower through the wheels*". I'm having trouble reconciling your published figures. With the XJR you say 423kW which translates to 575hp. An engine of 423kW would find it difficult to transmit 575hp "through the wheels".

I have a modified SRT8 that produces 720hp at the engine and on the dyno will give 600hp, however a more useable tune is 575hp – which we call at the wheels. Hence my confusion.

David Compton, via email

Love the attention to detail but the opening line to the story was a legendary Mad Max movie quote, it wasn't actually referencing the XJR.

WHERE'S THE ST?

I considered the new Fiesta ST before I upgraded from the old one to a Golf GTI Original in early 2018. Asked about it at my 'local' Ford dealer (there are not many left) and they told me the car had been confirmed to skip Australia.

To revheads like us, the Fiesta ST represents fantastic value. But to most of the car buying public, it's *thirty grand* for a tiny car that can barely fit more than two adults. I'm glad I bought my 2014 Fiesta ST and while I'm happy with my upgrade to the Golf, I kinda miss the little bastard and if Ford made the damn thing available, I would definitely have purchased another. The interior upgrades, dollar saving and factory LSD makes a very compelling argument.

Greg Broderick, via Facebook

The new Fiesta ST has been delayed for Oz; it's due to arrive early next year.

ROPEY IDEA

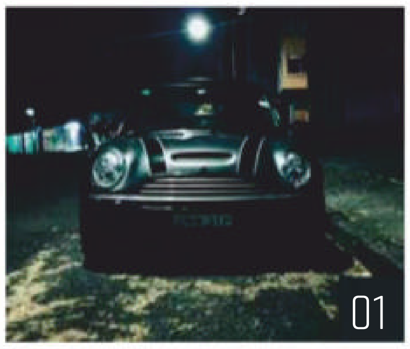
I regularly drive on the Goulburn Valley highway near Molesworth. Wire barriers are now installed on both sides, and along the middle. Recently, I came around a bend to find a car stopped in the emergency lane. When I saw it, it was too late to brake and the middle barrier prevented me from swerving slightly. If the driver opened their door, I would have killed them. I had nowhere

I THINK WE SHOULD BE THANKFUL THAT A NEW SUPRA EXISTS AT ALL

YOUR MONTH IN SOCIAL MEDIA

On The Wires

Tag your pics with **#motormag** so we can find you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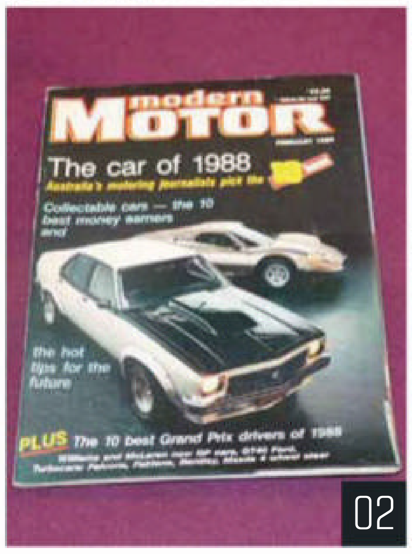
modern MOTOR
The car of 1988
Collectable cars — the 10 best money earners and
the hot tips for the future
PLUS The 10 best Grand Prix drivers of 1988
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05

1. **Petros Ktenas** "Gumtree blossom" – Bit of love for a tidy Mini Cooper S.
2. **Automo Vehicle Valuations on FB** "How time flies" – Throwing back to our February 1989 issue.
3. **zacariasupercars on Instagram** "Downforce. Looking angry" – Zacaria supercar gets set to rip...
4. **dim_930gtr on Instagram** "My GT-R and a mate's Series 3 RX-7 at a local cafe"
5. **cristianbrunelli on Instagram** "Rockin flares and a grey Murcielago" – Photographer Things.

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to go at 100km/h.

It was not their fault, they were nearly on the barrier. I support these barriers on the edges of roads, or down the centre of freeways, but on a road like this it was an incomprehensible risk.

Whilst I understand the reason the centre barrier was installed, to prevent vehicles crossing the centre line, nobody I have spoken to agrees with the centre barrier. They agree it is unsafe.

The outer barriers need to be moved at least a metre back if not more and the centre barrier removed before it creates more accidents. "Towards Zero" is noble, but will be waste of time and money without a more pragmatic approach.

Paul Salcombe, via email

P-PLATE SUPERCARS

On my P-plates, I want a Lamborghini. A Huracan would be cool, but I would love an Aventador. Alas there's one problem – it's illegal. I could get any car I could dream of on Ls, but on P-plates I'm only allowed about 130kW per tonne.

I'm only 13 so I have a few years to save, but there's no point in buying a car that I couldn't drive for a few years after my Ls. I could also spend the next few years campaigning to get the P-plate power restriction removed.

If my protest doesn't work what car should I get? I like how well the BRZ tS is rated against the MX-5 RF and 86 Performance Pack though in Bang For Your Bucks it is easily beaten by a Golf GTI. I've also been looking at an old atmo Lotus Elise, it just slips into the power requirement, or the lack-of-power requirement.

I'd love some advice, Lotus, BRZ or Golf, or something else? Anyway thanks for the great mag otherwise I wouldn't know where to start.

Elliot Benson, via email

Buy an early Toyota 86 GT manual. Lots around, pretty cheap. A reasonably safe car, reliable, and get involved in cheap motorsport like dirt khanacrosses. Find someone there to take you under their wing. Do it often, learn as much as you possibly can, and *then* shop for something with more power.

HOOKED ON SPEED

I have read your magazine for 15 years. Back in the 2000s you may remember a magazine called *SPEED*.

My friends and I avidly collected it and when it suddenly stopped arriving in NZ we failed to learn why. We then gathered all our issues stored them safely away in my parent's garage. Unfortunately some years ago they were dumped in a skip bin during a clean.

Since we have tried to find copies again as we all loved the way the articles were written, especially the tuning guides for each of the popular Japanese engine series. They helped shape the way we bought and modified our own cars through our early years but more so than anything else we were all blown away by the design and photography and the way it was put together. I thought there might be some of the stylistic influences of *SPEED* in some of *MOTOR*'s layouts?

We've had many beer-fuelled debate about what transpired to take down what we thought was going to become a staple of automotive literature. We would love to know what happened to and why it suddenly disappeared.

Ben Lewis, via email

***SPEED* was possibly too niche to be sustainable, but that also meant those who did love it, loved it. That included the current team at *MOTOR*. In fact, the designer who did the new *MOTOR* also designed *SPEED*. Not a coincidence!**

MOTOR WHO'S WHO IN THE ZOO THAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE CAR MAGAZINE

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MCLAREN 600LT

Woking whips up a tasty supercar treat

Rating
4.5

ENGINE 3799cc V8, DOHC, 32v, twin-turbo
POWER 441kW @ 7500rpm
TORQUE 620Nm @ 5500-6500rpm
0-100KM/H 2.9sec (claimed)
WEIGHT 1356kg • **PRICE** $455,000

LIKE: A top flight supercar that feels more special than the model on which it's based
DISLIKE: Nose way too low; an LSD would help; steering kickback still present

BY • SCOTT NEWMAN + PICS • NATHAN JACOBS

IN MANY WAYS the McLaren 600LT is like a pavlova. Both are light, more than the sum of their parts and very, very tasty. It takes a mere handful of ingredients and a simple recipe to create Australia's favourite Christmas dessert, and a similar process has transformed McLaren's Sports Series into a fire-breathing, tyre-burning supercar of the highest order.

You're probably aware that LT stands for Longtail, a homage to the McLaren F1 GTR Longtail that raced in the late '90s. It's a bit of a misnomer in the case of the 600LT, its rear elongated by just 74mm whereas the original F1 GTR was 641mm longer than the car on which it was based. Other dimensional changes include a ride height drop of 8mm and an extra 10mm of front track.

A recalibrated ECU and new top-exit exhaust system lifts outputs to a healthy 441kW/620Nm, an extra 22kW/20Nm over the 570S. Of more importance is the weight reduction. McLaren claims a 100kg diet compared to the 570S, though the actual figure depends on the spec of each car. Nonetheless, it's an impressive loss, with weight shaved from a number of areas. Forged aluminium suspension wishbones and uprights are 10.2kg lighter, aluminium brake calipers and stiffer carbon-ceramic discs from the Super Series shed another 4kg, while forged alloy wheels – 19.0 by 8.0-inch front; 20.0 by 11.0-inch rear – delete a further 17kg.

Fixed-back carbon racing seats delete 21kg while ditching carpet cuts 5.6kg and exposes the carbon-fibre floor, which does look better than the welded aluminium you find in Ferrari's lightweight models. You can even see the wiring harness snaking its way out from underneath the driver's seat. The aero addenda, consisting of a front splitter, longer rear diffuser, side skirts and fixed rear wing, is all crafted from carbon fibre and results in 100kg of downforce at 250km/h.

To look at, the 600LT's interior is all business, covered almost floor to ceiling with Alcantara, though our test car is fitted with air-con, sat-nav and a stereo – in this case an excellent 12-speaker Bowers & Wilkins system. All this eats into its weight advantage over a 570S, but makes the car far more useable on a day-to-day basis. Happily, the 600LT is not a hard-riding skateboard; even with thinly padded race seats there is enough suspension compliance to easily pass the everyday driver test – it's even relatively quiet until you hit coarse-chip tarmac, at which point the Trofeo R semi-slicks create a hell of a racket.

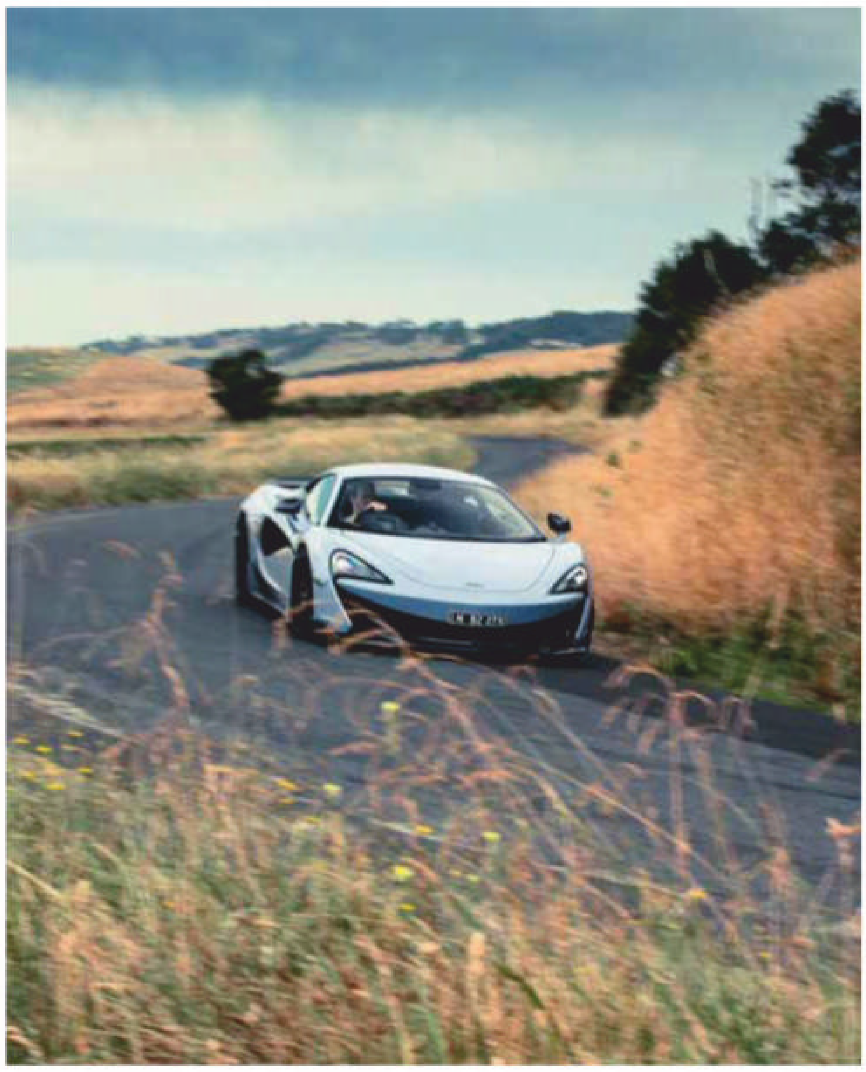
Those lightweight seats may be an issue, though. Hopefully they are available in varying sizes, as neither photographer Nathan Jacobs or I are large gentlemen, but we are wedged

ONE
As tested this 600LT wore almost $100K worth of options for an on-road cost of $565,305.50 (in Victoria)

TWO
Fixed carbon rear wing has a special treatment on its centre section to deal with the immense exhaust heat

THREE
This is the fourth LT model after the F1 GT and 675LT Coupe and Spider. The 600LT Spider will arrive before year's end

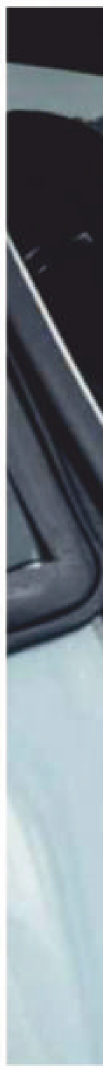
FOUR
Pirelli P Zero Trofeo R tyres are standard and offer outstanding grip yet are progressive at the limit



ABOVE Approaching the 600LT's limits on the road isn't easy; it would shine best on a smooth racetrack

BELOW 3.8-litre V8 revs to 8000rpm, an incredible number for a turbocharged engine, and produces 441kW on its way there

BOTTOM Brakes are lifted from the Super Series, with a 390mm/6-piston combo up front and a 380mm/4-piston rear



in tight. Anyone with wider hips (ie, women) or of larger stature simply wouldn't fit in our test car. That aside, the driving position is brilliant and I love the way it essentially forces you to left-foot brake. The nose lift ruins the stance but is vital in avoiding expensive scraping noises on driveways and such.

Press the start button and there's a lengthy whirr of starter motor before the M838TE 3.8-litre twin-turbo V8 awakens with a blare. It's loud but tuneless at low rpm, the combination of a flat-plane crank and forced induction giving it the aural appeal of an old Nissan SR20 inline-four with a cannon exhaust, thankfully without the drone.

Before you even begin to investigate its performance, the 600LT feels more special than its Sports Series siblings. Firstly, it looks incredible, the heavily raked profile and contrasting carbon panels giving it real supercar presence. On the move the Alcantara-clad steering wheel gently jiggles in response to bumps or cambers, while your already limited rear vision is further obscured by heat haze from those top-exit exhausts.

Press the throttle and there's a long enough delay to wonder what's happening before all hell breaks loose. To call the 600LT laggy is a step too far, but it doesn't have the immediate response of a 488 GTB or GT2 RS. Presumably it's the result of fairly large turbos, as the torrent of power that is unleashed all the way to 8000rpm is insane. The claimed performance numbers are comical: 0-100km/h in 2.9sec, 0-200km/h in 8.2sec, 0-400m in 10.4sec. Those figures put it virtually on par with the 720S, but while it doesn't quite feel as supernaturally rapid as its sibling, it's better for it.

THE INTOXICATING 600LT IS CURRENTLY THE BEST CAR MCLAREN MAKES

There's still enough power to make your head spin, but it doesn't dominate the experience like in the 720S. As crazy as it sounds for a car capable of mid-10sec quarter miles, the whole package feels beautifully homogenous. There's outrageous grip and traction, though enough sheer grunt for third-gear oversteer to be easily available, the superbly calibrated ESC subtly mopping up any over-exuberance. The steering is sublime, heavy at low speeds but so communicative that once you're somewhat accustomed to the speed you can throw the 600LT into corners and feel the tyres gently smear across the road.

A quick couple of words on the gearbox – it's perfect. In Track mode upshifts are seamless and downshifts are nicely mechanical, accompanied by vicious cracks from the exhausts. The brakes, too, are astounding; a little dead initially, but with benchmark power and feel in hard use. Under heavy load the engine also comes alive, the dull buzz quickly morphing into a sharp racecar-like growl. The slight lag makes for a more challenging drive, but arguably a more involving one. Having to accelerate early and time your inputs accordingly is simply part of learning to tame this beast.

There are a couple of issues: the steering kickback that blights all McLarens is lessened, but not eradicated and the lack of an LSD results in occasional inside wheelspin. By far the biggest issue, though, is not the length of the tail but the height of the nose. If there's not an F1-style wear plank under that expensive carbon splitter there needs to be, as time and time again it headbutts the tarmac.

As such, the 600LT comes tantalisingly short of a perfect score. On track, where there are no bumps to disturb its composure, it probably deserves one. Nevertheless, McLaren has created an intoxicating supercar that, even with the seemingly obligatory $100,000 options spend, significantly undercuts rivals from Ferrari and Porsche. It's currently the best car Woking makes. M

The NEMESIS

LAMBO HURACAN PERFORMANTE
5.2-litre V10, AWD, 470kW/600Nm, 0-100km/h 2.9sec, 1382kg, $483,866

Similar in approach but very different in mechanical execution, the Lambo using a bellowing atmo V10, all-wheel drive and clever active aerodynamics. Both easier to buy than a Ferrari 488 Pista.

BELOW The 600LT may form part of McLaren's Sports Series but in looks and performance it's every bit the supercar

SCREEN TIME

McLaren's IRIS system is looking a little dated but is easy enough to navigate with a bit of familiarisation. You're not buying a 600LT for its infotainment

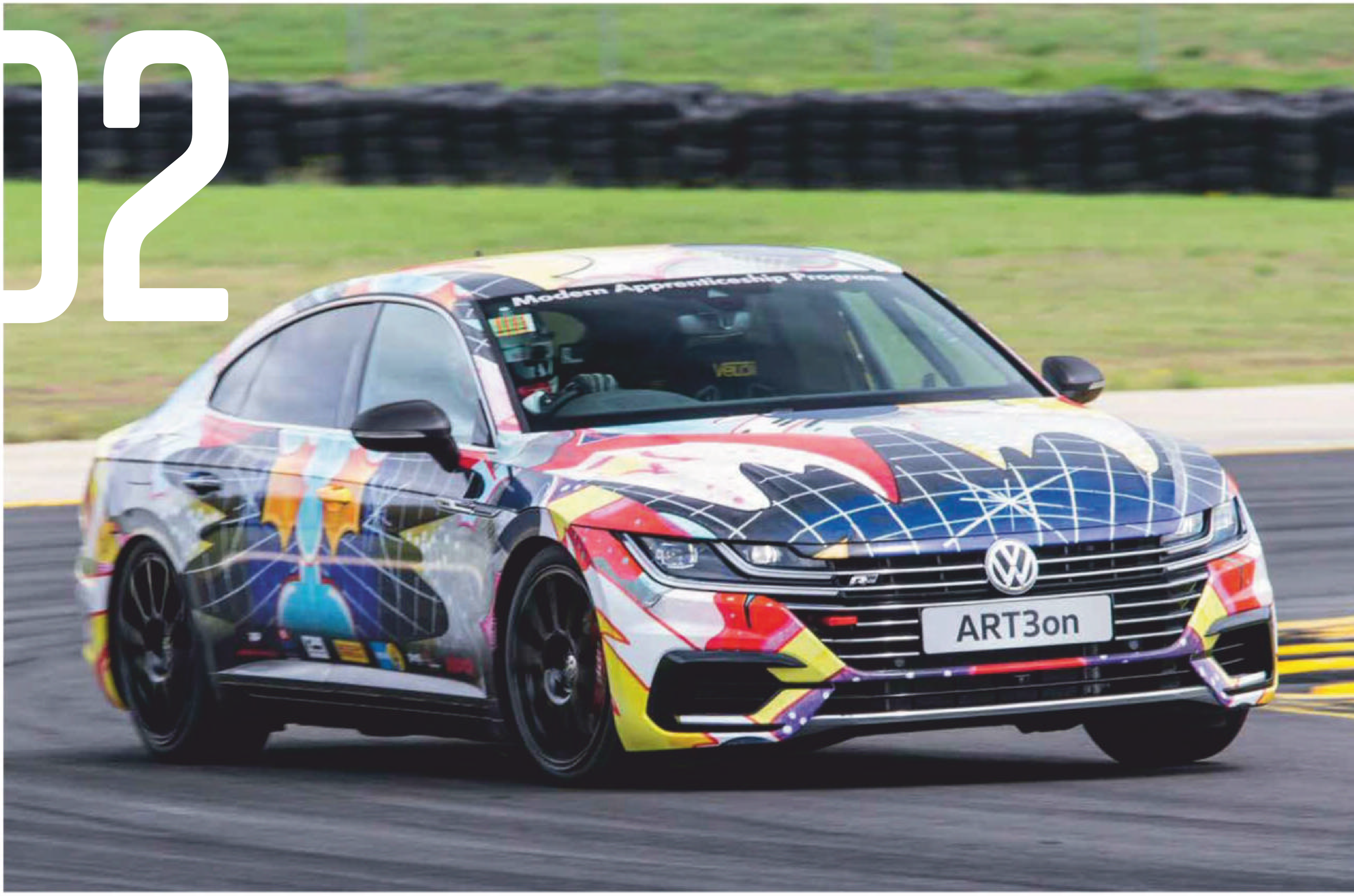
MAGIC CARPET

Alcantara coats almost every square centimetre of the 600LT's interior, not only giving it a racy ambience but ensuring zero windscreen reflections

IN THE TUB

Monocell II carbon tub weighs less than 80kg and allows the recently released 600LT Spider to retain its rigidity with next to no strengthening required

02



VW ARTEON

Skunkworks project expresses art in (rapid) motion

Rating 4.0

ENGINE 1984cc inline-four, DOHC, 16v, turbo
POWER 360kW @ N/A
TORQUE 600Nm @ N/A
0-100KM/H 3.9sec (claimed)
WEIGHT N/A • **PRICE** N/A

LIKE: Impressive pace; unsuspecting package; cool shift paddles
DISLIKE: Nervousness in low-grip conditions; low grip conditions ruining our fun

BY • CHRIS THOMPSON

CAREFUL… IF THERE'S one word to describe the manner in which we drove the laps Volkswagen Australia offered us in its apprentice-built Arteon time attack car, it's that. Careful.

Not just because it was very, very rainy, or because it was cold and the car is fitted with Pirelli P Zero Trofeo R semi-slicks, or even because the car's boasting 360kW and 600Nm. It's because Luddenham Raceway, the setting for our race car romp, is a tight track with little room for error.

There's a little more pressure, as the Arteon, which VW Australia has rolled out for us, is one of a kind. It's the latest in a still-fresh program in which Volkswagen sets its apprentices up with the goal to build a racecar using a standard VW product as a base, and then show it off at World Time Attack Challenge at Sydney Motorsport Park.

The previous result of this was a stripped-out VW Amarok with custom suspension, smaller track tyres, but the standard diesel V6 engine. It lapped Easter Creek in 1:57.01, two seconds quicker than a Golf GTI.

ABOVE
Despite its cultured and curved exterior something much more aggressive lies underneath

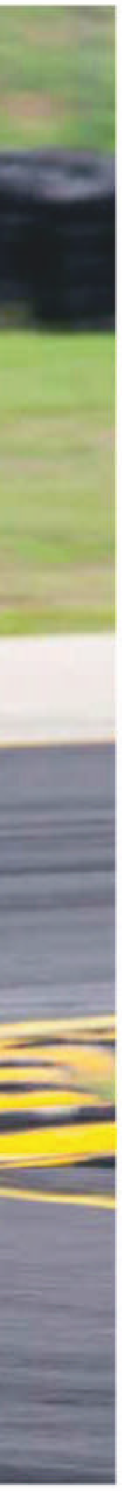
RIGHT
Upgraded APR brakes are almost mandatory for this 3.9sec 0-100km/h track beast

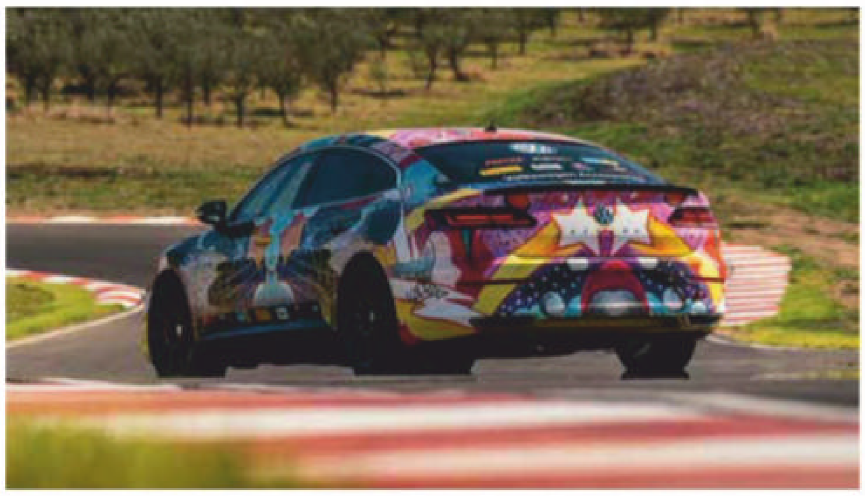
The Arteon time attack car, known to VW as the 'ART3on', was built with the aim of hitting 100km/h in less than four seconds, something which Volkswagen claims it has achieved uphill on Luddenham's straight with a 3.9sec run.

Aside from its custom track-focused build, it's also sporting a harlequin-like livery designed by a street artist from Sydney named Simon Murray.

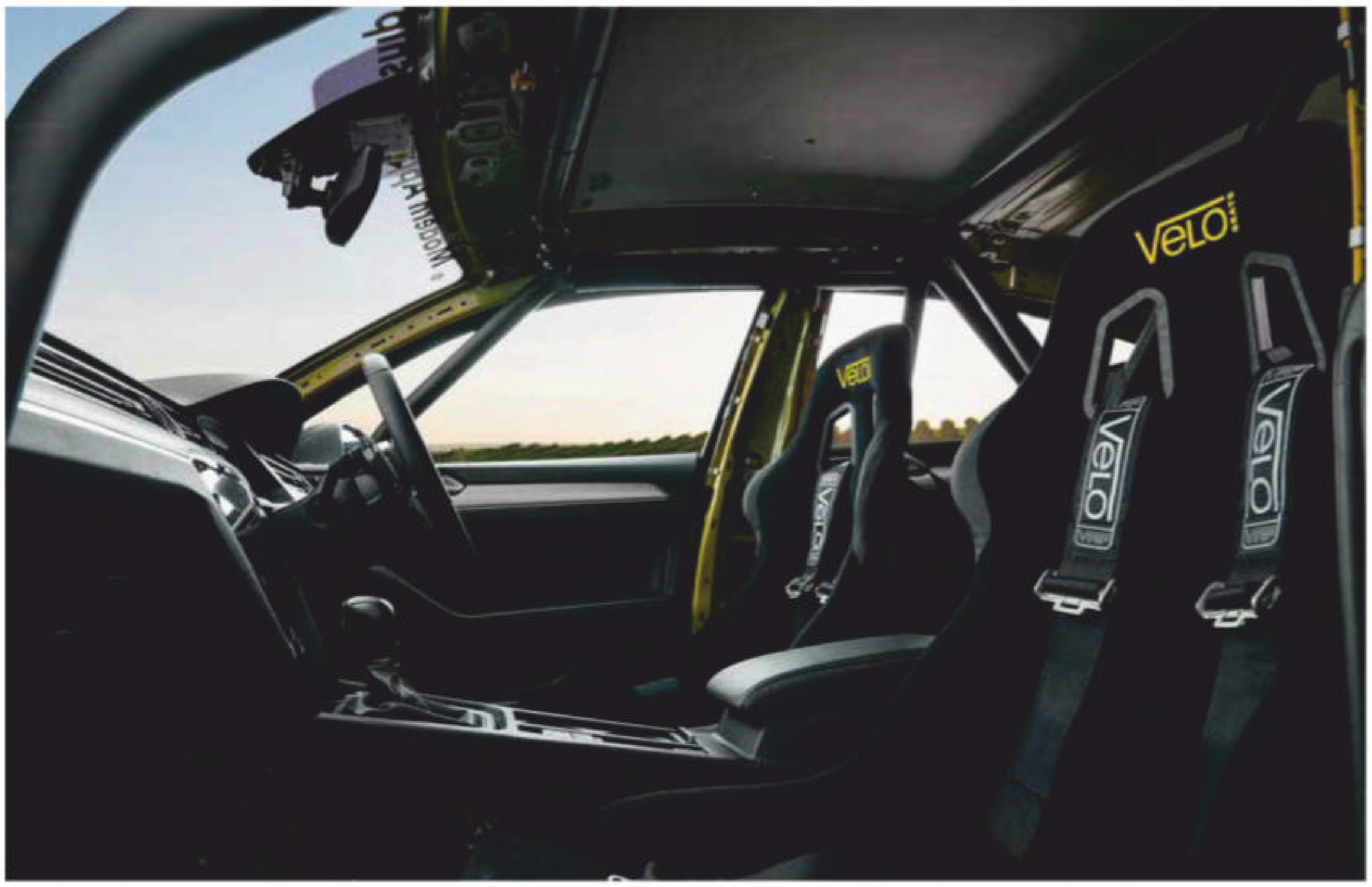
Underneath that is a host of modifications made to the chassis, suspension, and the Arteon's standard running gear. The massive lift in power and torque, up 154kW/250Nm from 206kW/350Nm to 360kW/600Nm, comes thanks to several RacingLine modifications including a stage 3 turbo and intercooler setup, plus intake, oil management and fuel pump upgrades.

Upgraded DSG software comes from Harding Performance and TVS





BELOW
Stripped interior with full bucket seats show how hardcore VW Oz's ART3on really is



Engineering, helping the standard seven-speed gearbox transfer the new outputs to the Arteon's four wheels.

Bilstein Australia supplied a custom racing suspension setup, and APR dished out the stopping power.

Inside, the seats have all been turfed and a roll cage put in place of the rears, while Velo racing seats sit up front. Most of the carpet and lining has been removed, while the dash and centre console are the only major interior elements that remain.

All up, the changes to the Arteon allowed a 1:49:02 lap of Eastern Creek with racer and driving coach Renato Loberto at the wheel. Luckily, Loberto was also on hand to coach us at Luddenham.

After a few demonstration laps in the passenger seat, during which Loberto gave a taste of what could go wrong and where it's likely to happen, it was time to drive.

Being strapped into the driver's seat is a bizarre fusion of the alien and familiar, facing Volkswagen's familiar dash while feeling a bucket seat underneath and race-style metal shift paddles behind the wheel.

At idle, the car is burbling and vibrating as you'd expect a racecar to do, competing with the visuals of its exterior for volume dominance. This is clearly not going to be as easy as driving a standard 206kW Arteon.

On the out lap, Loberto asks if we can keep things smooth and gradual, keeping throttle application conservative in corners and at low speeds. Even with this request – or plea – taken into account, the mix of cold-ish Trofeo Rs and a wet surface wasn't conducive to laying down 600Nm, and it showed in a rather startling fashion.

THE ANTI-LAG SYSTEM CREATES INTENSE CRACKLES AND BACKFIRES

A moment of reflexively strong right foot had the 360kW Volkswagen wanting to get sideways, while still heading for the outside of a bend.

"Did you feel that? You lost traction there," Loberto said. I was aware, or at least my heartrate was.

Its exhaust note is almost equally as exhilarating. The anti-lag system creates intense crackles and backfires on the overrun, and it sounds like there's a rally car trying to get out.

After getting more familiar with the Arteon's bitey gearshifts and sharp torque delivery, it becomes much friendlier, almost to the point where on any other day (and on a more open track) it seems like it could be considered 'easy' to drive.

After fighting puddles for enough laps to feel like the Arteon wasn't constantly at risk of meeting the wall, Loberto suggested opening it up properly on the short straight.

While the Arteon might not have topped a particularly impressive speed, in fact a Golf R was almost certainly faster in the conditions, its acceleration is brutal and a dry surface would surely reveal a proper weapon.

If anything, the rain gives us an excuse to ask VW Oz for another crack in the dry... M

FERRARI GTC4 LUSSO T

Turbo V8 might be the smarter pick over the V12

Rating 4.0

ENGINE 3855cc V8, DOHC, 32v, twin-turbo
POWER 449kW @ 7500rpm
TORQUE 760Nm @ 3000-5250rpm
0-100KM/H 3.5sec (claimed)
WEIGHT 1865kg • **PRICE** $503,888

LIKE: Sensational powertrain; brutal acceleration; rear-drive fun; sense of occasion; ride
DISLIKE: Rear-steer system; conservative electronics; flat seats; build quality issues

BY • DYLAN CAMPBELL + PICS • ELLEN DEWAR

EVER WANTED to give your Ferrari 488 GTB some sort of magic potion that transforms it into a four-seater with something resembling a boot? Well, if you could, it might take a form not unlike that of the GTC4Lusso T.

To create this car, Ferrari took a V12 GTC4Lusso and swapped out the big, 6.3-litre atmo donk with a 3.8-litre twin-turbo V8 (relax, the V12 model still exists). Then it also did away with the V12's alternative all-wheel drive system to make the V8 a rear-drive-only proposition. Weight has come down 55kg and in the process, shifted the distribution more rearward, now 46:54 front-to-rear versus 47:53 of the big twelve-potter. Ferrari has taken the opportunity to make the V8 a sportier drive with specific calibrations for the rear steering and adaptive dampers. Price is also down, $503K before options (and there will be options), a full $75K cheaper than the V12.

You might be tempted to think this car is the poorer sibling of the V12 model, but you'd be misled. With 449kW it's hardly underpowered, and 760Nm is in fact 63Nm more than the V12 can muster. Ferrari claims 0-100km/h in 3.5sec and a 320km/h top speed, versus the V12's 3.4sec and 335km/h. Meanwhile there's a seven-speed twin-clutch gearbox between the rear wheels; an electronically locking differential; and stopping the whole show, huge 398mm/360mm carbon ceramic brakes.

In the metal, the GTC is physically larger than you'd expect, wider and almost as long as a VF Commodore and with a bigger wheelbase. Photos don't really do it justice – it grows on you over time, and turns plenty of heads. It's got lots of presence.

Ferrari interiors have also come a long way. The leathers feel as expensive as leathers get, soft and waxy, while you won't find a cheap material anywhere inside, save for a few design solutions that feel a bit cheap for a $500K car, like the wobbly infotainment control knob or centre console lid.

Of course, you don't buy a Ferrari for its interior, what you really want to do is mash that right pedal and experience *that* engine and *that* transmission – the highlights of the whole car. And when you do, the rear 295mm P-Zeros are quickly overwhelmed by that heavily turbocharged flat-plane-crank V8. Yet traction is strong enough, in the dry at least, that you wonder why they ever thought about all-wheel drive, the GTC hooking up after another little rear wriggle at the top of second gear. Like other turbo models, Ferrari limits the torque in the lower gears, unleashing more with every new gear for acceleration that, in this car's case, isn't 488-spec, but would leave a BMW M4 or AMG C63 behind. And they are cars that blow people's minds with their straight-line ability. The GTC4Lusso T is seriously quick.

Get stuck into a few corners and you feel the big four-seater revealing an eagerness to corner like it's remembering a time it weighed 1600kg before letting itself go. It's ballistic down a winding road, the turbos hissing under load as you pile on speed at an incredible rate. Does it sound good? Yes, and it's pretty loud, although it's mostly tailpipe and you do miss the V12's crisp intake noise filling the entire cabin at any speed – in fairness it's a very hard noise to beat.

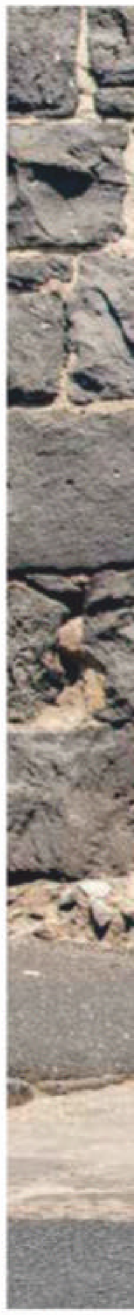
Despite razor-sharp, 488-esque steering and front-end, the GTC4Lusso T is strangely tricky to place. We couldn't quite figure it out until we flicked the manettino to ESC Off, which locks out the rear-steering, just to see what would happen. Suddenly the GTC4Lusso T started handling like a car again, and the confidence returned. The all-wheel steering is almost too aggressive in its calibration, causing the GTC to dart about a little too much for the speeds it is possible to carry. With fairly nannying TC and ESC, we also wish it had CT Off mode on the manettino so you can dance the rear around in safety – it's a rear-drive Ferrari, for crying out aloud!

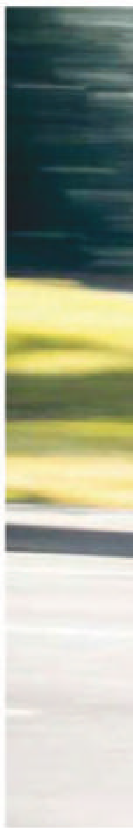
Still, you can have a lot of fun in this car. More than you'd think – more than the V12. As with many Ferrari models, the GTC4Lusso T does not like the cold, harsh light of logic. Some might argue you can get a more comfortable car, still crazy fast, for a lot less money, like a Porsche Panamera Turbo. But the big German can't match the four-pew Ferrari for how it makes you feel when you drive it; there's just something a bit special about a Ferrari. The big price ensures exclusivity – and that's just the way many owners like it. M

FOR ACCELERATION, THE GTC4LUSSO T WOULD LEAVE AN M4 OR C63 BEHIND

ABOVE
Next month, the GTC is a guest in our long-termer section where there are more thoughts to share

OPPOSITE
One of the main attractions of the V8 over the V12 will be the sizeable 30 per cent extra fuel range

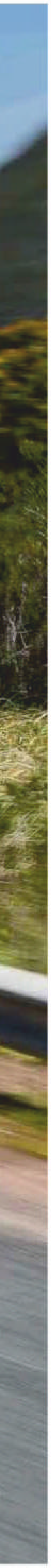




LEFT
Throttle response is excellent for a turbo car and the gearbox is fast and smooth; redline set at 7500rpm

04

IF THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE THE PERFORMANCE SUB-BRAND, THEN THE UPCOMING X3M IS TEMPTING



TOP LEFT
A 10.25-inch touchscreen display, iDrive6 infotainment and 16-speaker stereo ticks off the gadget checklist

TOP RIGHT
The M Sport exhaust, tied to the visceral B58's acoustics, means that this the best sounding sub-M six-pot BMW makes

ABOVE RIGHT
The X3 M40i would benefit from the extra grip provided by the Pirelli P Zeros fitted to the BMW X4 M40i

BMW X3 M40i

M Performance tweaks adds fun to the formula

Rating
4.0

ENGINE	2998cc inline-6, DOHC, 24v, turbo
POWER	265kW @ 5500-6500rpm
TORQUE	500Nm @ 1520-4800rpm
0-100KM/H	4.8sec (claimed)
WEIGHT	1810kg
PRICE	$99,529

LIKE: Dynamic improvements; strong performance from the B58 six; loads of practicality

DISLIKE: Hefty SUV platform can't be forgotten; needs more tyre grip; just get a fast wagon?

BY • TRENT GIUNCO

IT'S EASY TO make an SUV fast in a straight line – just add more power. But can it be engineered to be fun? That's the real question. Hence the burgeoning M Performance moniker is now attached to an X3, a variant that up until now has run without the haloed M badge on its rump.

What do you get for your $99,529? Impressive B58 powertrain aside, the M40i gains the M Sport Package, adaptive M xDrive all-wheel drive, adaptive M suspension, M Sport differential, eight-speed ZF automatic, bespoke M Sport exhaust system and 21-inch M light alloy wheels. It's safe to say that current X3 flagship (until the X3M arrives) isn't whispering the involvement of the M Division.

The interior and exterior styling also gains the M treatment. However, it's not as in your face. The cabin is more luxury-focused, while the bodywork changes merely hint at what lurks beneath. When removed from the spec sheet, subtle is the X3 M40i's middle name. It blends in like any BMW SUV.

Addressing the fast part of the X3 M40i equation is fairly straightforward. It is damn quick for an 1810kg, full-bodied SUV with a 550-litre boot. Actually, it's so big boned that the X3 has now dimensionally outgrown the original X5. The boosted 3.0-litre straight six is unquestionably effective. The M40i gets to 100km/h in a launch-control assisted 4.8 seconds with 265kW and a meaty 500Nm.

However, to simply call the B58 'effective' is selling it short. With a fat torque range coming on from as low as 1520rpm, you're never short of pulling power. There's a genuine reward for staying in a higher gear and working the mid-range, yet it'll happily rev out with purpose to redline. The turbo six never feels laggy or off the boil – you just plant your foot and it takes off.

The guttural sound the M40i makes while doing so, albeit slightly synthesised, is also in contrast to the image and presence of the X3. The pops and cracks on the overrun give real theatre to the experience. It will have everyone chortling on the way home from soccer practice...

So, that's job done by the M Division in terms of straight-line prowess, but the M40i doesn't kick an own goal when it comes to handling. There's an underlying rear-drive BMW-ness about the way it hurls itself along a twisty section of road and the adaptive dampers afford a compliant ride quality at speed. The brakes stand up to the task as well, however, the steering plays in a nondescript middle ground.

The ubiquitous drive modes come into play, too, with Sport Plus being the pick for spirited blasts. In the loosened dynamic setting you can get some controlled movement from the rear on corner entry. And thanks to the variable torque split and rear diff apportioning grunt to the wheel with the most grip, firing out past the apex is a fuss-free affair.

Letting the side down is the Bridgestone Alenza run-flat rubber. For an SUV with this performance level, a tyre with more bite is preferable as the X3 feels like it has more mechanical grip from the chassis than the tyres. Understeer can be induced and some of the M40i's movement under braking and load is down to the lack of tyre grip rather than a distinctly playful platform. However, the SUV part of the equation can't be forgotten here. Its dynamic abilities (and deficiencies) must always be kept in perspective with the genre it plays to.

The added appeal for buyers is that for all the performance on offer, the M40i is still an X3. It'll lug the family and dog around in supreme comfort. Loads of standard kit (radar cruise control, active lane keeping, blind-sport monitoring and a 12.3-inch digital dash) keeps the value equation in check.

If you're after tangible performance, yet still can't help but be pragmatic, then something like an Audi S4 Avant is going to tickle your fancy more of the time. However, the X3 isn't without charm, convenience or character. And it certainly isn't lacking dynamic talent. If this is supposed to be the performance sub-brand, then the upcoming X3M is a very tempting prospect. So is the X3 M40i fun? Somewhat surprisingly, yes. M

MERCEDES-AMG S63 COUPE

Living the high life in AMG's new beaut brute

Rating 4.5

ENGINE 3982cc V8, DOHC, 32v, twin-turbo
POWER 450kW @ 5500-6000rpm
TORQUE 900Nm @ 2750-4500rpm
0-100KM/H 4.1sec (estimated)
WEIGHT 1980kg • **PRICE** $370,500 (est)

LIKE: Huge performance; brutish noise; luxury interior; stylish looks; technology
DISLIKE: Complex; couple of iffy styling angles; occasional ride question mark

BY • SCOTT NEWMAN

MERCEDES-AMG S63 COUPE buyers are a small but dedicated bunch. Their choice of wheels, however, mark them out as people of not only extreme wealth – the entry ticket is $370,500, or $399,900 for the Cabriolet – but also excellent taste.

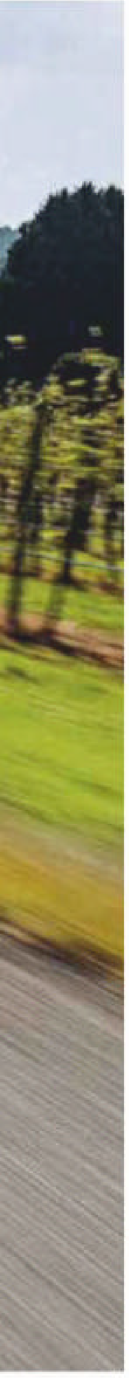
The two-door S63 has recently enjoyed a substantial update, incorporating all of the changes made to its sedan sibling, including a new, more powerful drivetrain, refreshed interior, subtly tweaked styling and an almost bewildering amount of new technology. It's not a machine that shouts about its abilities, but its breadth of talents is such that the S63 Coupe could make a claim to being the best car in the world. A bold claim which needs substantiating.

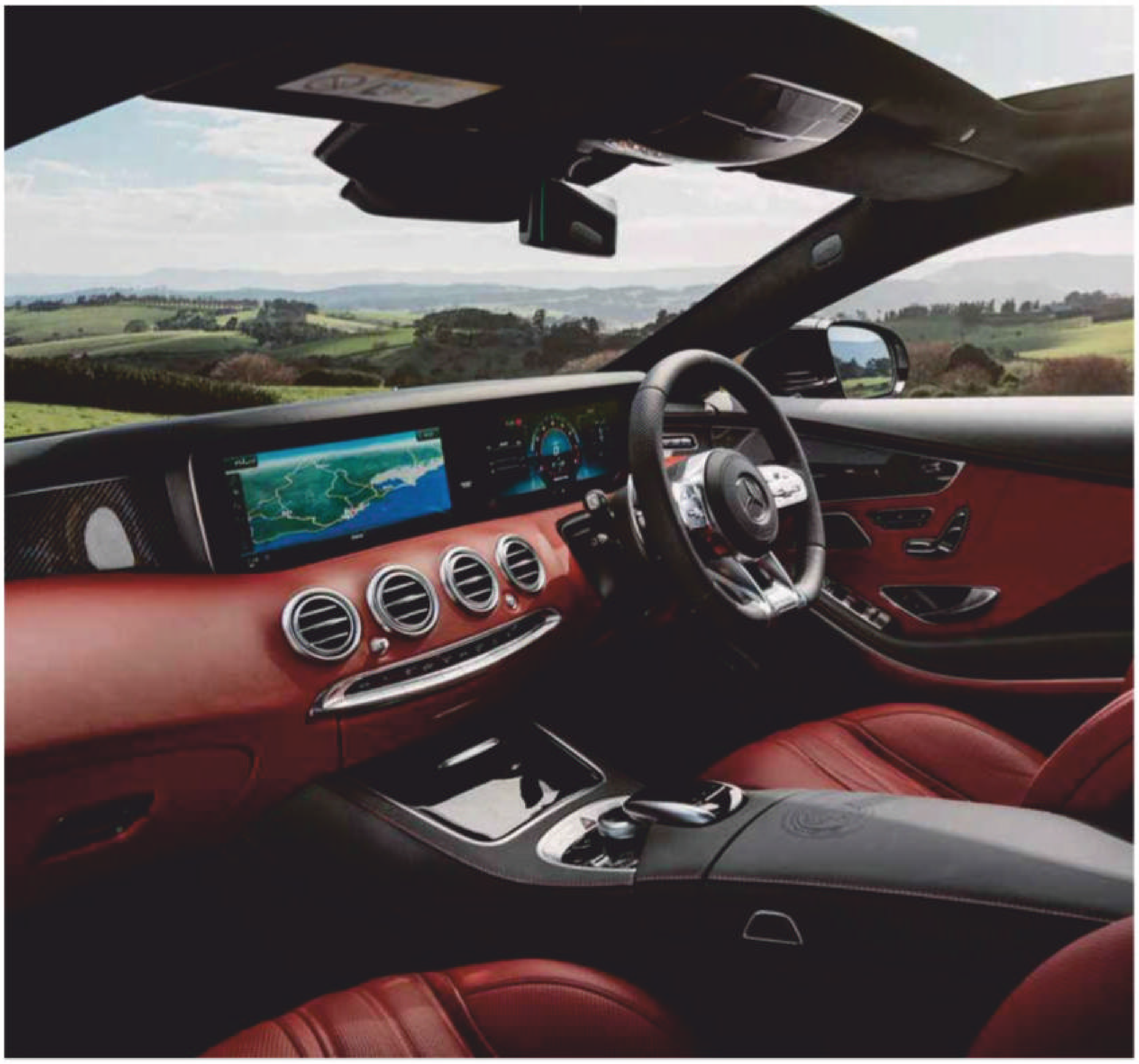
The inclusion of AMG's 4.0-litre twin-turbo V8 in its most potent guise certainly answers any performance questions. Despite the near two-tonne kerb weight, 450kW and 900Nm deliver crushing acceleration at any speed. Like its four-door sibling, the Coupe is built to dominate autobahns and can either cruise in near silence or deliver a snarling V8 soundtrack depending on the drive mode selected. The new engine now comes attached to AMG's nine-speed MCT gearbox, which works brilliantly in this application, for you're not chasing the final few milliseconds of shift speed like you might be in a C63 Coupe or similar.

ABOVE In general the S63 Coupe looks fantastic, though it can look tall and awkward if you're following it

The S63 replaces the S560's pre-emptive Magic Body Control system with AMG-tuned air suspension, but ride quality suffers little. There's very occasional pattering on ripply roads, but most bumps are smothered before reaching the occupants, making it easier to relax in one of the finest automotive interiors around.

Rich leather, glossy carbon and cool metal offer old-school luxury, but there are gadgets galore. Most obvious are the twin 12.3-inch digital displays for the infotainment and instruments, along with every conceivable active safety aid, heated and cooled massage seats, a 13-speaker Burmester stereo, digital





> ITS BREADTH OF TALENTS IS SUCH THAT THE MERCEDES-AMG S63 COUPE COULD MAKE A CLAIM TO BEING THE BEST CAR IN THE WORLD

TV and more, though a JLR-style split screen setup would be helpful to allow TV and navigation to be displayed simultaneously.

All this is available in the $314,900 S560, which is probably the pick if you're the grand touring type, especially as with a 345kW/700Nm 4.0-litre twin-turbo V8 it's still plenty powerful. Just don't drive an S63; the extra grunt is addictive and can be put to remarkably good use.

Local S63s remain rear-drive only, but while the coupe is no lighter than the sedan, its shorter wheelbase, lower centre of gravity and wider front track make it a sharper steer.

It is more than capable of carving tighter corners, offering impressive front-end accuracy for its size and weight and oversteer on demand on corner exit. It comes alive in fast, open sweepers, though, the only caveat being that driving it anywhere near its limit would result in licence-killing speeds. It can be driven quickly with confidence as its behaviour is much friendlier than you might expect. Ten-tenths action feels inappropriate, but the S63 Coupe relishes being punted. The heavier, wobblier Cabriolet isn't quite as keen, preferring a more leisurely (if still very brisk) pace.

So it has incredible performance and involving dynamics, along with a beautiful four-seat interior, superb refinement, the latest tech and, to these eyes at least, amazing looks (just avoid the rear from dead-straight-on). To spot the updated model, look for the new Panamericana grille at the front and OLED (organic light-emitting diode) tail-lights.

Finding flaws feels like nitpicking: The indicator stalk gear selector can be annoying, there's the occasional ride question mark, the diff could lock up tighter and more quickly. It's easy to see why many S-Class Coupe owners are repeat customers. Purchases at this end of the market are highly personal, but anyone in the market for an Aston Martin DB11, Bentley Continental GT or Ferrari Portofino should at least sample the two-door S63. You might end up joining a small, but dedicated bunch with excellent taste. M

ABOVE
Interior defines luxury. Great design, beautiful materials, packed with technology but practical, too, with useable rear seats

06

RANGE ROVER VELAR P380

Pace and grace in swoopy SUV, but it'll cost you

Rating
3.5

ENGINE 2995cc V6, DOHC, 24v, supercharger
POWER 280kW @ 6500rpm
TORQUE 450Nm @ 3500-5000rpm
0-100KM/H 5.7sec (claimed)
WEIGHT 1884kg • **PRICE** $163,842 (tested)

LIKE: Luxe interior; eye-catching exterior design; rear-biased handling; decent pace
DISLIKE: Lack of growl from the supercharged V6; options are very costly; poor tyre choice

BY • SCOTT NEWMAN + PICS • ALASTAIR BROOK

THE RANGE ROVER VELAR P380 HSE R-Dynamic loves to oversteer. That's an unusual sentence to write, but a factually accurate one, nonetheless. It feels important to start with a simple statement, as in many ways the Velar is incredibly complex.

In essence it's a mid-size SUV that slots between the Rangie Sport and Evoque for those who want plenty of style to go with their substance. It's quite the looker as SUVs go, though the sombre black paintwork and 21-inch wheels lessen its visual impact.

However, if you're in the market for a Velar, be prepared to do some research. There are a mind-boggling 50 variants of Velar to choose from, with four engines in six states of tune all available in either base, S, SE, or HSE trim levels. From there you can tick the R-Dynamic box, which adds more aggressive styling, snazzier interior trim and a Dynamic drive mode.

As mentioned, our test car is a P380 HSE R-Dynamic, meaning it's the sportiest looking model with the most kit and the biggest engine, a 280kW/450Nm 3.0-litre supercharged V6. You can theoretically buy a Velar for $71,550, whereas this range-topper starts at $135,762. I say starts, because there is also the (not so) small matter of the JLR options. Somehow, our black test car with its standard wheels wears almost $30K worth of options, bringing the total to $163,842.

Just as well, then, that it's enjoyable to drive. The engine is smooth, responsive and powerful, the outputs feeling nicely in tune with the amount of grunt the chassis can handle. It can be a little jerky during quick on-off throttle manoeuvres, but the biggest bugbear is the lack of noise. Uncorked, Jag's blown V6 sounds magnificent, but here it's more of a muted growl.

As you'd hope, it's refined and comfortable, the standard air suspension smothering most, though not all, bumps. At 1884kg, the Velar isn't particularly heavy, but the weight is up high and, combined with the soft setup, there is a reasonable amount of body roll to contend with. On the way into a corner, the Velar is remarkably playful, turning in under brakes easily provoking the rear end.

Pressing the throttle continues to involve the tail, the variable all-wheel drive system feeling to send a healthy dose of power to the outside rear tyre, sharply pivoting the car towards corner exit. The Velar's dynamic talents are such that it deserves better tyres. It's impressively able. It just makes no sense at this money. A Range Rover Sport is little more, while the likes of the GLC63 AMG, forthcoming X3M and Jag's own F-Pace SVR offer much more performance for similar cash. M

ABOVE
The sportiest Velar looks the part (especially in black) and has substance to match the luxury

BELOW
The Velar adds a very flash, if perhaps overly screen-heavy and quite complex, interior to its virtues

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01

MAZDA MX-5 RF AUTO

Six-speed slushbox not quite the right fit

IT FEELS WRONG to sit in the driver's seat of an MX-5 and find yourself faced with a paddle-equipped wheel, and only two pedals. There's nothing objectively wrong with the six-speed automatic gearbox Mazda has made available for its roadster, it works smoothly in other models. But it doesn't suit the MX-5's character particularly well. Using the car as a more sporting commute than a standard city car makes sense for the auto MX-5, but its lack of LSD (a manual-only feature) and involvement make it harder to vibe with when the Sunday drive comes around. While you can still find the right rhythm on a lively drive, the gearbox is sometimes slow to change and can throw the car off balance if you're not prepared for the small lurch as acceleration dips for a moment. Left to its own devices in its Sport setting, it will generally sit you in the sweet spot (high in the rev range) for acceleration, but holds it there for too long when you don't need it. Even when you're getting stuck in, it feels slower than the manual. If Mazda's MX-5 philosophy of jinba ittai, horse and rider as one, is to hold up with its roadster, you need the manual gearbox to create a more fluid connection between human and machine. The manual is also $2000 cheaper, which is nice. **– *CT***

SPECS: 2.0 I4; 135kW @ 7000rpm; 205Nm @ 4000rpm; RWD; 1112kg; $41,400

02

TOYOTA COROLLA

Hire-car hottie? Not just yet

TRADITIONALLY, one of us would only review a new Toyota Corolla if we were being punished. But we'll admit the 12th-generation car roused our curiosity, and a pinch of excitement, when we read its press kit. Its new platform extends its wheelbase by 60mm, drops its centre of gravity 10mm and stiffens torsional rigidity by 60 per cent. It also seems Toyota chose multi-link rear suspension over boot space, as the latter drops 69 litres. Its seats are well bolstered, the manual shifter is placed exactly where you want and there's even a decent rev-match function that helps mask its high clutch bite point on downshifts. Its new 2.0-litre four revs to 6850rpm, but fails to make its 125kW/200Nm feel anything more than pragmatic. Instead, its chassis balance is the talking point. Yes, the base Ascent Sport squirms on its 205/50 R16-profile tyres (the ZR upgrades to 225/40 18s) at turn-in, but it doesn't immediately fall into horrible understeer. Its chassis feels dynamic and perhaps capable of brake-activated oversteer if an undefeatable ESP didn't squash the fun so early on. It's a decent effort, but still a set of springs, swaybars and 25kW/50Nm away from being a true, exciting warm hatch. **– *LC***

SPECS: 2.0 I4; 125kW @ 6600rpm; 200Nm @ 4400rpm; FWD; 1320kg; $22,870

03

FORD MUSTANG GT

Stock suspension setup adds painful bite

FORD GAVE US more reasons than ever to break the piggy bank on its 2018 Mustang. A new V8 and exhaust system were certainly tempting, but if you found the previous model's ride too taxing on your spine, then $2750 adaptive dampers would be its big draw. Inspired by our experience at PCOTY, we wondered what the new car's passive setup drives like. New dampers, revised rear toe-links and upsized rear sway bars are still fitted, but non-Magneride cars miss out on bigger front bearings and inverted front struts. Although we could only test one in greasy and wet conditions, you can tell it loses some front purchase and lateral body control as a result. Its secondary ride comfort takes a hit, too, as there's more wheel and tyre deflection over nasty roads. Annoyingly, it's still unclear how much the adaptive dampers improve this, as all the Magneride cars we've driven have rode on forged alloys and our test car here is on the stock wheels. When they measure 19-inches tall and over 9.0-inches across, a lighter material could shed a lot of weight to make a big difference. So, in summary, it's slightly stiffer and worse riding at low speeds, but a definitive verdict for them has to wait until we drive either suspension setup on the same wheels. **– *LC***

SPECS: 5.0 V8; 339kW @ 7000rpm; 556Nm @ 3600rpm; RWD; 1668kg; $62,990

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SHELBY
Super Snake

SNAKE

THINK THE ATMO MUSTANG GT IS A BIT TOO TAME? SHELBY ADDS

SHELBY
VIC SNKE·00

BY DAVID MORLEY +PICS NATHAN JACOBS

BITE

GRIP AND GRUNT FOR ONE HELL OF AN 800-HORSEPOWER RIDE

IN THE WORLD of tuned Mustangs, there are many names to consider. And yet, when most people think of a ’Stang with embiggened cojones, it’s generally one with wide racing stripes over the roof, side-pipes and a Shelby badge on the front quarter panel. Okay, so the Federales have killed off the side-pipe thing, but even though he has now left the building, the street-savvy, chicken-farmer-cum-race-driver’s legacy continues in the form of the Shelby Mustang.

Now within that pantheon of Shelby ponies, there’s one that has a horn growing out of its forehead – the Super Snake. It’s not that the Super Snake was just a pipe-dream, because in 1967 it really did exist. But only in the form of one prototype. Seems Goodyear wanted a test mule that could run its new tyres at high speed for PR purposes, and turned to Carroll Shelby.

Shelby came up with a ’67 Fastback crammed full of Le Mans-spec 427 big-block making an alleged 800 horsepower. It successfully tested the tyres for 500 miles at an average of 142mph with Carroll himself taking the thing up to 170mph just to see what would happen. The original plan then called for Ford to go into limited production of the Super Snake, but when it was revealed that the price would be double a GT500, the whole deal was shelved. But while it never reached production, the legend was alive and hissing.

Fast forward to 2007 and Carroll Shelby decides it’s time to take care of some unfinished business, so the Super Snake goes into production for the first time. Now it’s based on the fifth-gen Mustang but, crucially, there’s a supercharger option that takes things to 725 horsepower (540kW). Thing is, if you want one, you need to send a stock Mustang to Shelby’s Las Vegas skunkworks.

IF YOU WANT TO INVOKE THE GHOSTS OF SNAKES PAST, YOU UP THE ANTE TO THE 800-HORSE PACKAGE

That changed for the Aussie buyers with the sixth-gen ponycar when Melbourne-based Mustang Motorsport was given the royal decree to modify local cars to Super Snake specification, complete with the all-important Shelby build-plate. In fact, Mustang Motorsport is the biggest Shelby dealer outside North America, so the relationship is rock solid. It also means that your new Super Snake is covered by the three-year/60,000km Shelby factory warranty and is 100 per cent emissions (and everything else) legal. It has the compliance plates to prove it.

Based on the facelifted MY18 Mustang, the Super Snake package starts with a supercharged 700-horse (525kW) package, but if you really want to invoke the ghosts of Snakes past, you up the ante to the 800-horse package. Which is exactly what the owner of this car did.

The basic package adds a supercharger to what is essentially a stock Coyote engine as well as an active exhaust system and the relevant ECU upgrades. You can have it in manual or automatic (with a revised trans cooler) and it also adds a Brembo brake upgrade with monster rotors, replacement suspension to ‘Track Handling’ specification and some other suspension tweaks including new camber/caster plates and adjustable toe-rods at the rear. There are some dressy bits like Shelby-branded engine-bay caps and a specific coolant-overflow tank. Wheels are 20-inch fatties with Pilot Sport 4S hoops.

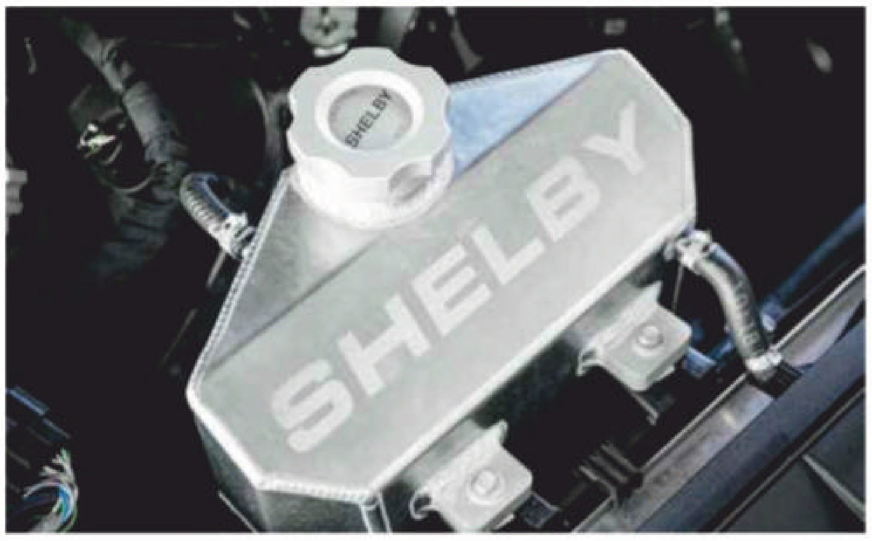
Body mods include a new bonnet to clear the pump that has a distinctly different profile, rocker panels with winglets, a new front fascia with functional brake ducts, upper and lower rear

RIGHT
The Shelby-branded brake calipers are actually Brembo items, which are hidden by forged, polished 20-inch wheels

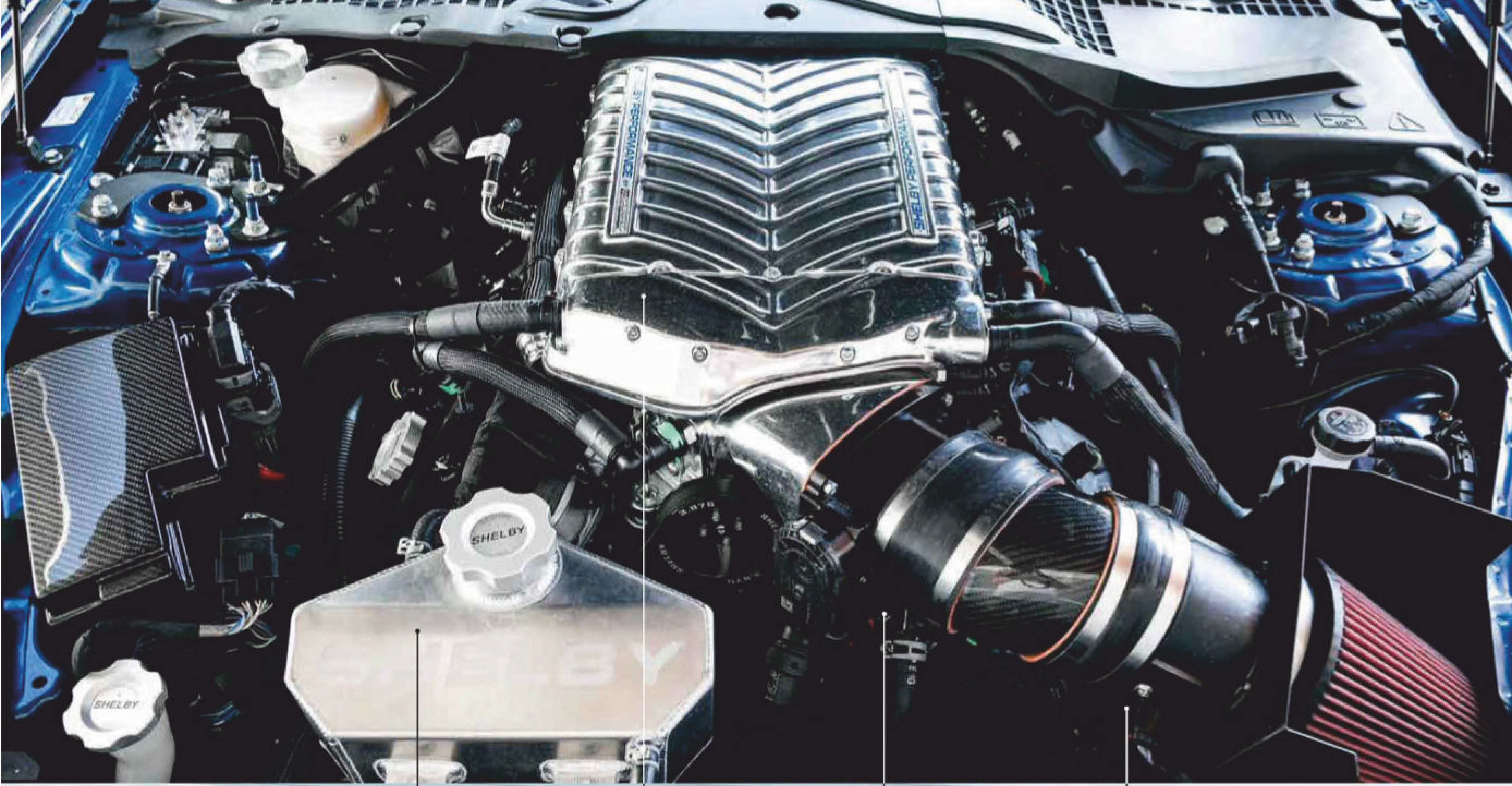
SHELBY
FORGE

BELOW
This Super Snake features stripes that are actually painted on along with Shelby and Super Snake decals down the side

Super Snake



MAIN (RIGHT)
You can opt for the ‘Wide Body Edition’, which adds 2.5 inches to the front and 4.0 inches to the rear track along with brake and suspension upgrades



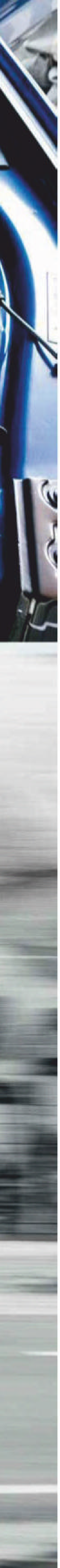
04
ONK
DETAILS

1. JAZZY BITS
It's not just about 'go' under the bonnet, with the 'show' accounted for with Shelby-branded engine-bay caps, coolant overflow tank and carbon fibre – not forgetting the polished supercharger

2. JUST ADD BOOST
The 800hp 3.0-litre Whipple Supercharger Pack isn't fooling around and comes in at $12,290 over the 'base' output. The ECU has been upgraded to cope and extra-long wheel studs are required

3. POWER UPGRADE
Both the power and torque of the 5038cc V8 have nearly doubled to 600kW and 980Nm (from 339kW and 556Nm) with the blower. Cold air is fed by the pod filter and expelled via the active exhaust

4. KEEPING COOL
While the rear end is bolstered by a one-piece tailshaft and beefier axles, an intercooler and a bigger radiator make sure the Super Snake doesn't run too hot while screaming at 7500rpm



BELOW
While the Shelby name might be all American, the Super Snake treatment can be added in Melbourne by Mustang Motorsport

PROFESSIONALLY MODIFIED BY
MUSTANG MOTORSPORT
SHELBY
AUSTRALIA
13 HAYWARD ROAD FERNTREE GULLY 03 9753 5799

> THERE'S JUST ENOUGH BLOWER WHINE TO REMIND YOU YOU'RE SITTING BEHIND A BIG LUMP OF SPECIAL

diffuser, a rear spoiler with a Shelby logo cut into a section of it and the relevant badges. The Super Snake deal also includes over-the-roof stripes, and inside, there are re-trimmed seats, extra gauges, floor mats, light-up sill panels and some carbon bits to make things a bit more special.

This car, of course, went all the way with the upgrade to the 3.0-litre Whipple blower that, interestingly, mounts the intercooler above the rotors and requires a new one-piece tailshaft, beefier axles, a bigger radiator and the curious looking extra-long wheel studs to cope with 600kW.

This particular owner also wanted the stripes painted on, not stuck on. So he got them.

The downside to getting hold of a freshly minted Super Snake like this one is that it's too new. The owner only picked it up four or five days before we turned up on his doorstep, so the whole shebang only had about 420km on the odo. Now, I don't care about the theories of the mechanical terrorist who reckons that engines need to be run in hard to ever be any good, because I'm not that guy. Fact is, this engine was tighter than a scientist's head in a politician's hat, and it just wouldn't have been right to give it a flogging. Not for another few thousand kliks anyway. (Throw in the fact that the owner was sitting beside me...)

Even the couple of wee throttle-squirts I did get away with were enough to dunk me squarely into that lake of torque just shy of 1000 Newtons deep. And if the angry 25 per cent of the rev-range is as good as the lower three-quarters, then we're talking happy-happy-joy-joy. In fact, there's a theory that this particular blower makes more top-end grunt than some, so it should be a hoot when it's loosened up.

It should gel with the revised 5.0-litre's new-found 7500rpm redline, too. Meanwhile, there's just enough blower whine to remind you you're sitting behind a big lump of special.

Bottom line, though, is, no, I don't know have any idea of how fast it will be across a quarter mile once it's bedded in. And, no, I can't give an accurate estimate of its 0-100km/h time. Suffice to say both those numbers will, by any standards, be impressively small. However, what I can tell you is that there's an enormous torque wave waiting to be surfed. And that, as a point-to-point car, the Super Snake is going to set new standards for Mustang-based lifeforms.

Part of that is going to be based on the car's ability to lose speed when necessary. These brakes are stupendous. But more than that, they offer up a high, firm pedal that has just enough squish to give you confidence, but enough stoicism that you know you aren't gonna make them fade even on a racetrack.

Team them with a suspension that, on first acquaintances, feels like it could be a tad too firm for Aussie conditions, but which soon comes back to you largely thanks to the superbly matched damper rates. That said, I still get the sense it's a bit too tied-down for typically bumpy back roads, if only because

ABOVE
This isn't a one-trick pony, with the Super Snake gaining extensive suspension upgrades and grippy Michelin rubber

BELOW
AutoMetre Cobalt gauges keep fuel, oil boost pressures in check so you know how much boost the V8 is consuming

10
20
COBALT
30
10
20
30
AutoMeter
40
45
BOOST
PRESS

THE PRICE OF FANG

WHEN I first looked at the build sheet for this car, I thought the Super Snake list price must have included the basic Mustang as well. I mean, at $93,100 for the basic 700-horse package, that's not a bad guess right?

Wrong. The car is extra.

But think about it some more. The engine is now supercharged, all the bouncy, stoppy bits are new, the interior is re-trimmed and even the bonnet is a different piece. And what price do you put on the fact that this is an honest-to-god Shelby Mustang?

Well, 93-grand I guess.

And if you're going to drop that sort of coin, you might as well go all the way and grab the 800-horse option, right? Exactly. Although I'm not so sure about the painted (versus stuck-on) stripes, which added a full $12,000 to the total. That takes the grand total to $117,390 which, when added to the sticker on the screen of a brand-new Mustang GT automatic, takes the final bill to almost $184,000. Call it two-hundred large by the time it's on the road and insured and you're getting close. *– DM*

ABOVE LEFT
Inside the Super Snake has seen a makeover with the addition of Alcantara, carbon fibre (dash kit is $2000) as well as gauges

ABOVE RIGHT
Standard leather pews (not the optional Recaros) gain blue fabric inserts along with blue stitching and Shelby embossing

it'll be going awful quick if and when it does let go. Oh yeah, there's a tiny bit of tramlining, which is doubtless a function of the aggressive alignment settings. Oh, and those meaty 275 front hoops probably have an effect, too. And like any modern Mustang, this one always feels like a big car with a big, long bonnet that sits you over the rear axle. The extra-bulge bonnet only amplifies this impression.

I really only have two bones to pick in the driveline department. This first of these is a fuel-cut that feels a bit overly keen to step in. Bimble around on super-light throttle openings (which is anytime you begin to feel attached to your licence) and the Shelby can start to shunt a fraction as the injection (or so it feels) comes and goes. It's only ever on those tiny throttle percentages, but it kind of spoils the otherwise factory feel that Mustang Motorsport routinely builds into its cars. It wouldn't surprise me to learn that Shelby has a revised throttle or fuel map to fix this, such is the brand's usual attention to detail.

THE SUPER SNAKE IS THE SORT OF CAR THAT WILL SWING A PUNCH BEFORE IT SITS DOWN TO MEDIATE

Then again, you need to keep this in perspective. Even a decade ago, a 5.0-litre engine making 800 horsepower would have been a right pig of a thing. That this one can create that sort of thrust and yet suffer only a minor driveability glitch is testament to the powers of the electron. And the clever people who map their journeys around a slice of silicon.

My other gripe is something I've noticed in every other MY19 Mustang automatic. And that's a gearbox that doesn't always seem to know its own mind (as my grandmother would have put it. And, boy, she would have known). Like I said, this isn't a Shelby thing, it's a Mustang thing, but I wonder whether the extra torque – and, therefore, reduced requirement for all those ratios – might not be of much help.

The bottom line is that this car, fast though it is, still won't replace a Ferrari 488 in the garage. Or an R8 V10 or a 911. It's still the sort of car that will swing a punch before it sits down to mediate and it's fair to speculate that Carroll Shelby would absolutely approve. The Super Snake might have gained a factory build-plate and lost its unicorn status, but it retains the wild-child feel of a concept with a Le Mans-winning heart and a design brief to test tyres to death.

The Specs

Coyote gains deadly venom

SHELBY SUPER SNAKE

BODY	2-door, 4-seat coupe
DRIVE	rear-wheel
ENGINE	5038cc V8, DOHC, 32v, supercharged
BORE/STROKE	93.0 x 92.7mm
COMPRESSION	12.0:1
POWER	600kW @ 7400rpm
TORQUE	980Nm @ 5250rpm
POWER/WEIGHT	357kW/tonne
TRANSMISSION	10-speed auto
WEIGHT	1681kg
SUSPENSION (F)	struts, anti-roll bar, coil springs, dampers
SUSPENSION (R)	multi-link, anti-roll bar, coil springs, dampers
L/W/H	4789/1916/1396mm
WHEELBASE	2720mm
STEERING	electrically assisted rack-and-pinion
BRAKES (F)	380mm, slotted, two-piece rotors, 6-piston calipers
BRAKES (R)	380mm, slotted, two-piece rotors, 4-piston calipers
WHEELS	20.0 x 9.5-inch (f); 20 x 11.0-inch (r)
TYRE SIZES	275/35 ZR20 (f); 305/30 ZR20 (r)
TYRE	Michelin Pilot Sport 4S
PRICE AS TESTED	$183,649
PROS	Huge poke; legendary back-story; epic soundtrack
CONS	Will the trans match the drapes? It isn't exactly cheap
STAR RATING	★★★★☆

Hankook
MOTOR
PERFORMANCE
CAR OF THE YEAR
2019

BY DYLAN CAMPBELL + **PICS** ELLEN DEWAR/ALASTAIR BROOK

GUN SLINGERS

11 OF THE HOTTEST NEW PERFORMANCE MODELS UNLEASHED AT AUSTRALIA'S HOTTEST NEW RACETRACK. PERFORMANCE CAR OF THE YEAR 2019 IS GO

COMING UP!

062 ADELAIDE ROAD TEST
072 THE BEND TRACK TEST
083 11TH TO 2ND PLACE
098 ALL HAIL THE NEW KING
104 A ROBBO SOLIQUOY

SOUTH AUSTRALIA, THE GREAT land of strange posh accents, Stobie poles, Farmers' Union Iced Coffee, a great ocean of dirt and, dare we say, an even greater inferiority complex. Did you know South Australia was the only colony not settled by convicts? If you didn't, clearly you've never met a true blue South Australian before.

Yet as much as we like poking fun at our South Australian friends – they love to call Adelaide small, but hate it when someone interstate says as much – this great land is quickly becoming a Mecca for car and motorsport enthusiasts. Like a spaceship from *Independence Day*, the otherworldly Bend Motorsport Park has arrived and landed permanently an hour south-east of Adelaide. With a proper FIA Grade 2 racetrack, up to 7.77km long, Australia's only CIK karting track and soon, an ANDRA-spec dragstrip, its creators imagine The Bend as a one-

The Five Wise Guys

Meet your 2019 PCOTY judges

PCOTY DEPT.
INSURANCE FRAUD
PCOTY DEPT.
LAST CHIP EATER
PCOTY DEPT.
SEDDO IMPOSTER
PCOTY DEPT.
TYRE ABUSER
PCOTY DEPT.
SERIAL SPEEDER

DYLAN CAMPBELL
Head honcho, logistical mastermind and creative guru. Fastest driver in all the land. May have threatened the person writing this with a job on *DOLLY*

LOUIS CORDONY
First-time judge, but no road-test newbie. Loves belting around in his Rotax, or his Forester (but is not a lesbian). Has a tapeworm called Gary

DAVID MORLEY
Judged the first PCOTY in 1996. Has forgotten more about cars than the rest of us know. Road-tested the Model T when it was new... probably

SCOTT NEWMAN
Rally obsessed, allergic to ESP, knows where to put a car in a corner. Feared by tyres. A favourite of photographers when tired

RICK KELLY
We're not exactly sure who this is – he kind of just showed up and kept driving things – but we really like his suit. We wish we were sponsored by Minties!

stop "theme park" for motorsport enthusiasts. And also their gift – from a wealthy family of migrants who own an empire of BP service stations – to a state of Australia they owe so much.

Meanwhile, independent of that, and merely 30 minutes from Adelaide's CBD itself lies a playground of tarmac rally roads known as the Hills, where the locals drive fast and dawdlers driving at what would be normal eastern seaboard speeds are almost ran off the road.

So what better place, we thought, than to aim an 11-strong armada of some of the year's hottest fast new cars. Engineering over-achievers, the best metal released in Australia in the last 12 months – that we could get our hands on – precisely $2.2m, 3685kW, 72 cylinders and 13 turbochargers. This is the first time in its 23-year history Performance Car of the Year – Australia's original, best and most-trusted performance car award – has strafed South Australia.

The Plan is thus: Day One, send the troops and weaponry 650km from Melbourne to The Bend Motorsport Park. Day Two and Three, tear off in search of Adelaide's best roads. Day Four, hit The Bend Motorsport Park's challenging 3.41km West Circuit (leaving the 7.77km monster configuration to another day as we'd need a week to do our track testing alone...). This includes drag times, run on The Bend's flat, 1km front straight. Day Five, collapse in a heap, slash drive all the way back to Melbourne. Test 11 cars between five judges, get essentially a magazine's worth of notes and photography, two TV show segments for the new WhichCar program on Channel 10, and a whole lotta ones and zeros for the *MOTOR* website and social media (PCOTY is not confined to a magazine these days, oh no). And all on a budget dwarfed by whatever is tangled in Clive Palmer's pocket lint on a given day... whose idea was all this again?

MAIN
We tried to keep a lower profile in South Oz but needless to say, with cars like these we did draw attention to ourselves

2019
Hankook
MOTOR
PERFORMANCE
CAR OF THE YEAR

Start Your Engines

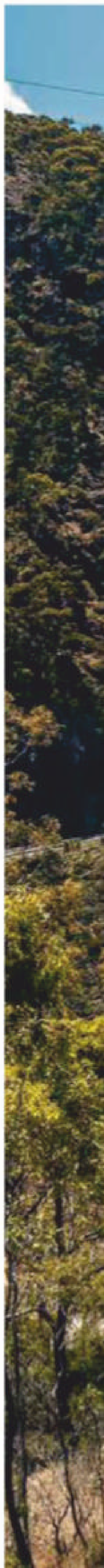
The 11 cars racing for our trophy
(prices as tested)

ALPINE A110
Turbo I4, mid engine, RWD, 185kW/320Nm, 1103kg, $106,500
It's French, mid-engine, quite bloody fast and promises a classic lightweight driving experience. Dark horse

BMW M2 COMPETITION
Twin-turbo I6, RWD, 302kW/550Nm, 1575kg, $107,900
Baby M-car scores the M4's engine and lots of tasty M bits… but don't call it a parts-bin special. Brings back old 1M night-sweats

FORD MUSTANG GT
Atmo V8, RWD, 339kW/556Nm, 1742kg, $75,640
Henry's V8 hay-muncher has had a nip and tuck but is also sharper, faster, louder… and now with a 10-speed auto

AUDI R8 RWS
Atmo V10, mid engine, RWD, 397kW/540Nm, 1590kg, $321,100
A rear-drive R8, you say? With an atmo V10 spinning to 8500rpm? Excuse us a moment… the 'Rear Wheel Series' is on-paper perfection



With the battleground and the strategy for our high octane offensive outlined, let's talk weaponry.

Having spent our childhoods rubbing rabbits' feet, avoiding mirrors, black cats and ladders and hoping there's a car god listening to our prayers, now in adulthood we have the very privileged task of testing hundreds of new performance models every year. We know which cars are good – and which are mutton dressed as lamb. Coalescing in the *MOTOR* hivemind over 12 months, The PCOTY Shortlist forms throughout the year, approximately 20 of the fastest, finest, hottest and most cutting-edge new machines you can park in your driveway. Then, we whittle it some more, and then some whittling happens whether we like it or not – Ferrari 812 Superfast? Not available (still licking wounds from a few years ago?) Lamborghini Aventador SVJ, Aston Martin DBS Superleggera, McLaren 600LT and Senna, 992 911? Also not quite here yet, but walk-up starts for PCOTY 2020.

And so we give you our 2019 PCOTY competitors, beginning, we may as well, with the one car that looks like a super-sized red-back spider and copping probably the same amount of up-scaled venom: the Porsche 911 GT2 RS.

Dripping with intimidation, the GT2 RS is a 911 Turbo dipped in a bubbling vat of lunacy in the early stages of production. Power from the 3.8-litre twin-turbo flat-six is upped to an OH&S-incompatible 515kW. And then, in possibly the greatest test for Porsche's traction control and ESP engineers, the front driveshafts are removed to create a rear-drive only car. Unlike GT2s past, this RS is seven-speed PDK only – no manual. Which is probably for the best, as with a claimed 0-100km/h time of 2.8 seconds – and a claimed 0-200km/h of 8.3 seconds, only 0.5sec off a 918 Spyder – the GT2 RS keeps you busy enough. Beast? Yes. Expensive? $729,930 as-tested, a $41K chunk of that the lighter weight Weissach Pack. With a GT3 RS and Touring potentially also available, we invited the GT2 RS as the ultimate of all three released in the last 12 months. But can its epic performance overcome its epic price?

Attempting to prise PCOTY victory from the pincers of the red Nurburgring king, BMW has stumped up two Bavarian bruisers in the M5 and M2 Competitions. The former has had its 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 wound to an eye-watering

ABOVE
Castrol's Rick Kelly – two-time Bathurst winner, 2006 V8 Supercar champion – is our tame racing driver for PCOTY 2019

BMW M5 COMPETITION

Twin-turbo V8, AWD, 460kW/750Nm, 1865kg, $229,900

Competition treatment promises to turn the big, bad F90 into a proper track monster – if all-wheel drive hasn't spoiled the M5

RENAULT MEGANE RS280

Turbo I4, FWD, 205kW/390Nm, 1407kg, $47,860

Renault Sport are the hot-hatch masters. So can their new Megane RS keep a hot hatch on the PCOTY trophy for another year?

PORSCHE 911 GT2 RS

Twin-turbo flat-6, rear-engine, RWD, 515kW/750Nm, 1470kg, $729,930

Gunning for its 14th PCOTY win, Porsche fronts with its most powerful, expensive 911 ever. Gulp

CHEVROLET CAMARO 2SS

Atmo V8, RWD, 339kW/617Nm, 1710kg, $85,990

HSV-converted Chevy has 1.2 litres more V8 than the Mustang – but it'll need a few other tricks to justify the extra coin

HYUNDAI i30 N

Turbo I4, FWD, 202kW/353Nm, 1429kg, $43,485

It cracks, it pops, it dances – Hyundai has nailed its first ever hot hatch in the i30 N, and enters its first ever PCOTY!

MERCEDES-AMG GT C

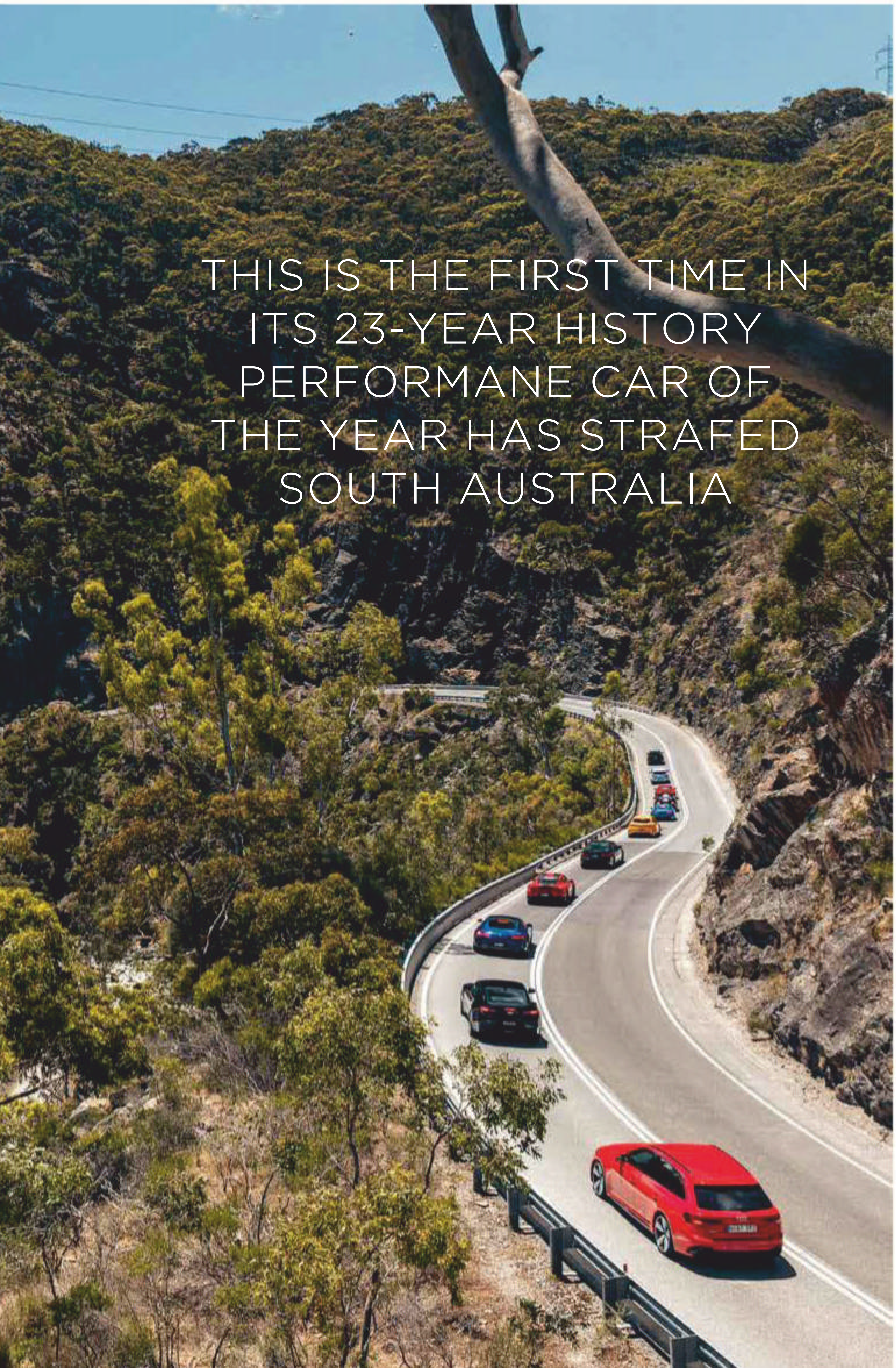
Twin-turbo V8, RWD, 410kW/680Nm, 1625kg, $345,829

AMG's drop-dead gorgeous V8 supercar finished a lowly 3rd at PCOTY a few years ago. Can it redeem in potent GT C guise?

AUDI RS4 AVANT

Twin-turbo V6, AWD, 331kW/600Nm, 1715kg, $165,546

The V8 is dead. Long live the V8... but Audi's supercar-startling war wagon now has a V6 with a twin-turbo tidal wave of torque



THIS IS THE FIRST TIME IN ITS 23-YEAR HISTORY PERFORMANE CAR OF THE YEAR HAS STRAFED SOUTH AUSTRALIA

460kW/750Nm – but has all-wheel drive turned the legendary M sedan into something a bit limp? We doubt it, but we'll find out in what will be the F90 M5's first PCOTY appearance.

Nobody can expect anything other than tyre-frying rear-drive excitement from the M2 Competition under whose bonnet now nestles the M4's S55 twin-turbo straight-six – literally nestling in a hoop of structural carbon-fibre. Both these BMWs, thanks in part to things like solid suspension mounts, promise next-level driver connection and track stamina.

Also hailing from the Fatherland is the Mercedes-AMG GT C. With hardware from the big daddy GT R, the potent 410kW twin-turbo V8 GT C hopes to redeem the AMG GT's somewhat disappointing third place finish at its first PCOTY in 2016. Hell, if this was a competition for hottest-looking car, the brooding, all-hips GT C would be a walk-up start.

Doing away with turbochargers or any kind of forced induction for their V8s, there's the Ford Mustang GT and Chevrolet Camaro 2SS. Technically rivals, a $10K price gap separates these two American muscle cars. The Mustang is fresh from a facelift, the big news a 10-speed auto with close-

The Criteria

What we look for in a winner

1 PERFORMANCE
Raw speed; powertrain response, feel, and smoothness

2 DYNAMICS
Grip, chassis balance, steering response, and braking ability

3 ACCESSIBILITY
Effort versus reward, ESP calibration, feedback levels

4 LIVEABILITY
Road noise, ride comfort, ergonomics, visibility, interior

5 VALUE
Price, cost of options, performance offered

6 'X FACTOR'
Styling, exhaust note, how badly you want one in your garage

packed ratios, but also Ford's new nag is a bit faster, louder, and generally fitter. The Camaro boasts a cubic advantage over the 5.0-litre Mustang, and a sinister V8 noise. Holden Special Vehicles converts the Camaro to right-hand drive – so what will this brand new era of V8 rear-drive performance yield at PCOTY 2019? At the very least, it needs to beat Mustang.

Rivalries simmer in the hot hatch ranks. Last year, the Honda Civic Type R took a shock win at Performance Car of the Year, proving you don't need supercar performance to wow our judges. How did it win? It had as much *talent* as the best supercars. And so the i30 N, Hyundai's first crack at a hot hatch, arrives at PCOTY with high hopes – and it should, as it's fantastic. Renault Sport also fronts with its new Megane RS280, and presumably similarly high hopes, however, while Renault has a history of stellar hot hatches, we will have to see how the latest front-drive Frenchie fares as it's not exactly proven popular with road testers thus far.

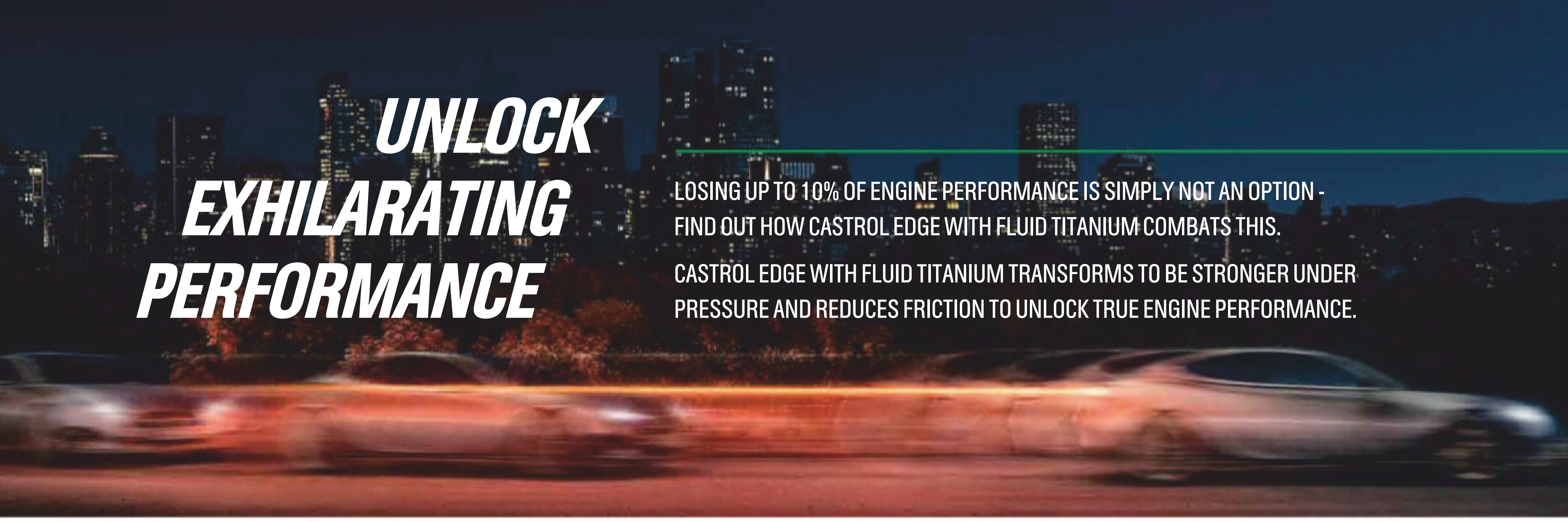
A car that has, however, is also French – the Alpine A110. It has the same engine as the RS280, but in the back, and driving the rear wheels. An aluminium-rich chassis cuts weight to just 1103kg. Could the early hype translate into a PCOTY victory?

Audi's screaming atmo V10 R8 'Rear Wheel Series' is a dark horse. Having shelved the quattro system for this car – it's rear drive – and at a relatively sharp $321K as-tested, the R8 RWS is hoping for a repeat of R8 PCOTY victories in 2009 and 2013.

The RS4 Avant is another contender from the Ingolstadt stable. Diehard fans may rue the atmo V8 being replaced with a twin-turbo V6, but trust us, the torque-rich six-potter has taken the RS4 to a new level of acceleration and overall ability.

As ever, this is not a comparison test; we are not directly comparing a $45K Hyundai to an Audi R8. By way of the judging criteria above, each car is measured against its intended purpose and how close the manufacturer got. To simplify further, a lot of it is just how *good* the car is – according to our very experienced judging panel and their highly calibrated bum-o-meters. (That's a technical term.) Speaking of which, it's time to put those into action, grab the keys, brim the tanks and head for the hills – the Adelaide ones. M

ABOVE
It's five dream days that we look forward to all year, but we also take PCOTY – and picking a winner – extremely seriously!



UNLOCK EXHILARATING PERFORMANCE

LOSING UP TO 10% OF ENGINE PERFORMANCE IS SIMPLY NOT AN OPTION - FIND OUT HOW CASTROL EDGE WITH FLUID TITANIUM COMBATS THIS.

CASTROL EDGE WITH FLUID TITANIUM TRANSFORMS TO BE STRONGER UNDER PRESSURE AND REDUCES FRICTION TO UNLOCK TRUE ENGINE PERFORMANCE.

TODAY'S ENGINES ARE SMALLER AND MORE EFFICIENT, WITHOUT SACRIFICING PERFORMANCE.

THESE ADVANCES IN ENGINE DESIGN CHALLENGE OIL WITH INCREASED PRESSURE. TO WITHSTAND THIS, OILS NEED TO BE STRONGER THEN EVER BEFORE.

During every engine revolution, intense friction hotspots occur, flashing into existence for a matter of micro-seconds, they continually move around the engine as it delivers power.

Collectively, these friction hotspots can waste **up to 10% of engine performance.**

To fight performance-robbing friction, Castrol sought to develop its strongest, most advanced engine oil, Castrol EDGE with a unique technology - Fluid TITANIUM.

CASTROL EDGE WITH FLUID TITANIUM TRANSFORMS ITS STRUCTURE UNDER PRESSURE TO KEEP METAL SURFACES APART AND REDUCES PERFORMANCE-ROBBING FRICTION BY 20%* *ALLOWING DRIVERS TO UNLOCK TRUE ENGINE PERFORMANCE.*

Castrol's reputation for innovation and extraordinary performance has helped Castrol EDGE become the oil of choice for some of the world's leading car manufacturers.

In partnership, Castrol provides ultimate performance to millions of drivers around the world. In fact, many new cars roll off the production line filled with Castrol inside.

Castrol works closely with leading manufacturers including Audi, Jaguar, Land Rover, Skoda, Volkswagen and Volvo resulting in formulations that are specifically developed for the latest engines and their unique technology requirements.

Castrol also tests its oils with motorsport partners on the track. Nothing tests oil like a motorsport vehicle being pushed to the limits. That's why Castrol's oils have such an exceptional track record in Formula One™, Supercars, FIA World Rally Championship, FIA World Endurance Championship, MotoGP™, and many others. Castrol is proud to be an official partner of the Renault F1 Team™.

A partnership founded on a mission to win.

Castrol's analysis included tests to prove the lubricant's capacity to help minimise metal-to-metal contact, reduce friction and operate at extreme pressures.

TEST 1: TRANSFORMS UNDER PRESSURE

Compressed under intense pressure, the oil was studied using x-rays emitted from electrons travelling at almost the speed of light.

This showed that **Castrol EDGE with Fluid TITANIUM** physically transforms its structure under pressure to keep metal apart. When the pressure subsides, the oil reverts to its free-flowing state.

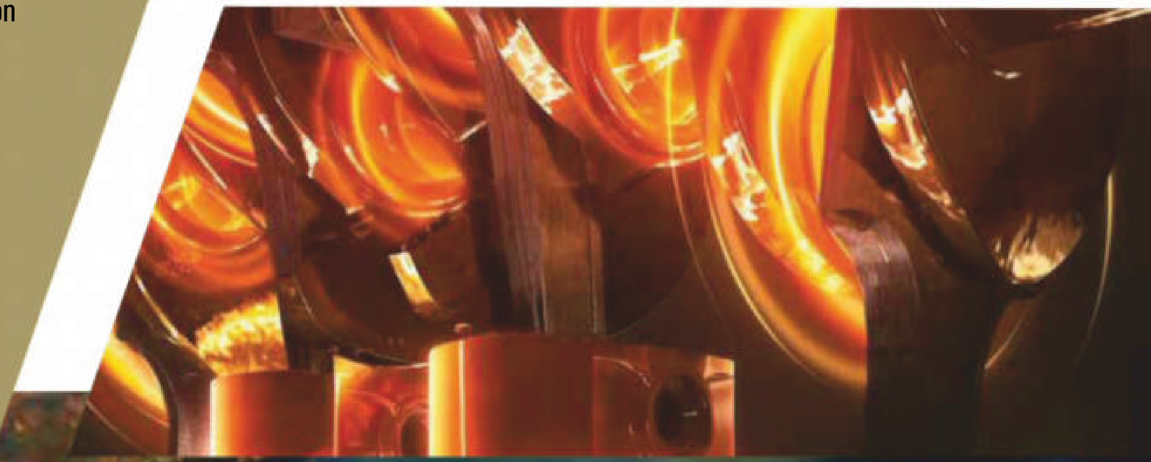
TEST 3: REDUCES PERFORMANCE-ROBBING FRICTION

Using an industry-recognised test, friction levels were measured across a range of speeds and engine conditions. **Castrol EDGE with Fluid TITANIUM** was shown to reduce performance-robbing friction by 20%*.

TEST 2: STRONGER UNDER PRESSURE

Using pioneering ultrasound techniques developed by a leading university, the stiffness of oil between contact points on the valvetrain were compared.

Tests showed that **Castrol EDGE with Fluid TITANIUM** was stiffer at the point of contact, when compared to the same oil without Fluid TITANIUM – proving the oil is stronger under pressure.



PERFORMANCE CAN BE EXPERIENCED IN MANY WAYS - NOT LEAST THE PURE JOY OF ACCELERATION, THE SATISFYING RELEASE OF TORQUE, OR THE SIMPLE EXHILARATION OF RAW SPEED.

CASTROL EDGE WITH FLUID TITANIUM TRANSFORMS TO BE STRONGER UNDER PRESSURE TO UNLOCK TRUE ENGINE PERFORMANCE.

* On average, compared to the same oil without Fluid TITANIUM. Products tested represented 50% of 2017 sales volume.

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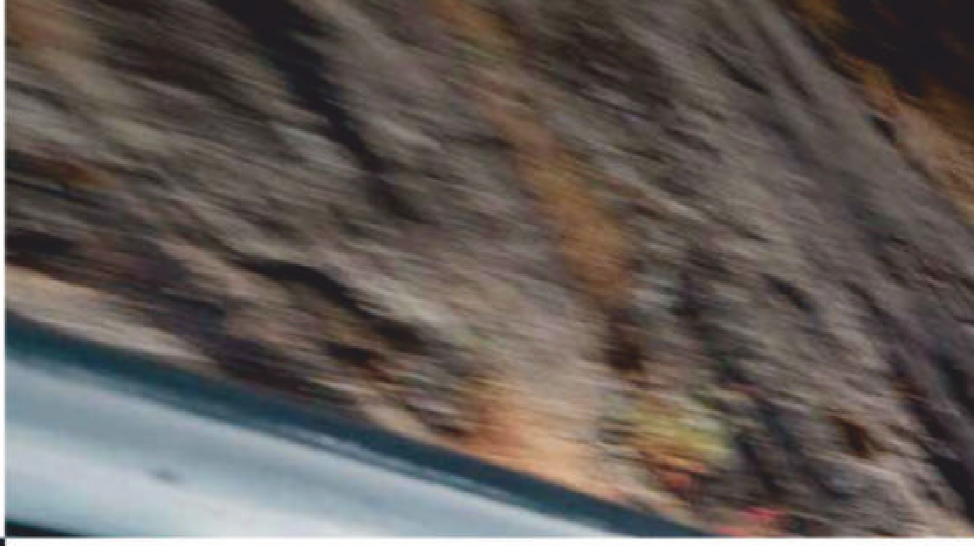
Road

VALLEY OF THE KINGS

BY DAVID MORLEY + PICS ELLEN DEWAR/ALASTAIR BROOK

NOT 30 MINUTES FROM CENTRAL ADELAIDE ARE SOME OF THE BEST DRIVING ROADS IN AUSTRALIA. WHERE BETTER FOR ROUND ONE OF THE PCOTY 2019 FIGHT



I’M NOT A GREAT passenger. Even as a kid, before I could verbalise what people were doing wrong behind the wheel, I was picking up on bad driving ju-ju. That said, the bloke who drove me the 700km from Melbourne to The Bend (Sean, one of the video dudes) did a good job and his experience with driving big, heavy things in underground mines shone through. But even so, 700 kliks in the wrong seat of a dual-cab ute had me well and truly ready to jump in the driver’s chair of something. Anything.

And here’s what’s extra special and nice about working for *MOTOR* in general and PCOTY in particular. By keeping my elbows out and being bigger than any of the *MOTOR* staffers, the first car I plonked my butt into was none other than three-quarters of a million bucks’ worth of 911 GT2 RS. Some days…

A little bit of me always dies when I see a car like this with but two pedals, however, at least the PDK trans means there’s one less thing for the driver to concentrate on. Which is lucky, because even on the road – even on the one-kilometre drive to the servo – there’s plenty with which to concern oneself. Well, there would be if the damn thing wasn’t so noisy. Seriously, it sounds like you’ve been bundled into a 44-gallon drum and rolled down a bluestone alley. While 10 kids run along beside, hitting the sides with aluminium baseball bats.

I cannot recall another Porsche where I’ve been able to hear the PDK clattering away, but in this one I could. And the road noise from the tyres suggests to me that there’s precisely zero sound deadening under those voluptuous haunches. To be fair, most of the noise is coming from the rear of the car, but equally, when you can hear the rear pads snuggling up to the calipers when you touch the anchors, it’s fairly clear this ain’t no limo. I’m also sitting on the buckle of the harness and the Alcantara wheel and shift knob have already been darkened by somebody else’s grease. At some point, race overtakes road, and I reckon the GT2 RS has passed that point.

First thing next morning it was off on the road drive proper. So I did the only sensible thing and grabbed the keys to the Alpine. This was a car I’d been dying to get hold of since I heard about plans to build it, but even then, my high expectations were kind of matched. Okay, again, I’d personally be happier with three pedals and a stick-shift, but if you’ve gotta have a double-clutch, this is as sweet as any of them.

And everything else, I just loved. The look of it is great, the sound is right and the mid-engined layout gives it that little touch of special that separates mere cars from truly

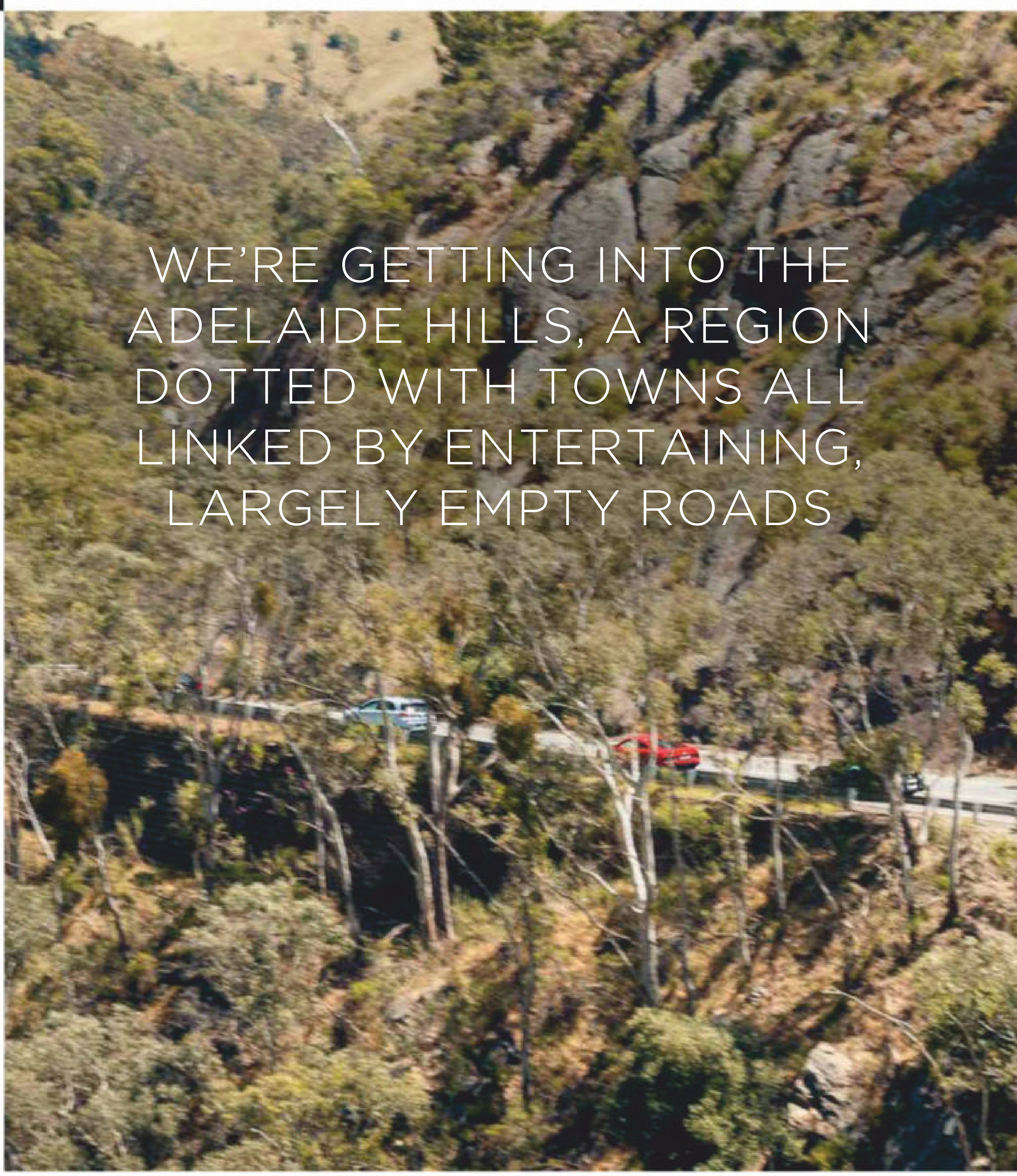
RIGHT Despite being the cheapest key in the PCOTY bowl, the i30 N’s cheeky, yet accomplished nature made it a favourite

MAIN Group tracking shots are notoriously hard to achieve with this many cars, Gorge Road’s twist and turns not helping the situation

FAR RIGHT Ad dude Nick won the T-shirt competition by a country mile; Megane RS failed to find much love on the road loop

THERE'S A SUPPLENESS THAT THE A110'S APPEARANCE BELIES ... THIS IS A COMPELLING ROAD CAR FOR TWO

PORSCHE 935
"MOBY DICK"



WE'RE GETTING INTO THE ADELAIDE HILLS, A REGION DOTTED WITH TOWNS ALL LINKED BY ENTERTAINING, LARGELY EMPTY ROADS

magnificent pieces of machinery. And yes, I'll put the Alpine in that category. On the road, the steering actually reminded me of the way an old, torsion-beam, air-cooled 911 kind of makes the wheel dance in your hands a bit. Actually, the old 911 comparison holds for the overall handling, too, and while the Alpine's front end feels just about right for the road, there's always lift-off oversteer available. But there's a suppleness, too, that the car's appearance belies and with that jewel of an interior, this is a seriously good road car for two. Sounds proper, as well.

By now we're getting into the Adelaide Hills, a region dotted with cute-as-a-button little towns all linked by entertaining, largely empty roads. And even when you do range up behind a local in an SUV, they're just about as likely to move over and let you past as drivers in the rest of the country will sit on the centreline and speed up when you try to get by. That's almost enough reason on its own to pack up and move to the SA hills.

By now I'm in the i30 N, reacquainting myself with a car

26KM OF BLISS

Gorge Road, South Australia

HUNDREDS OF kilometres of tarmac are draped across the Adelaide Hills like ribbons of cooked spaghetti, but not every road is a winner. Gorge Road is certified gold, though, which is why it's one of the key stages for the Classic Adelaide tarmac rally each year. It's almost perfect, with tight, bumpy canyon sections giving way to smooth, fast rollercoaster bits. Even better, there's a great cafe at the Cudlee Creek end, while if you run short of fuel, it's a quick run down the hill into town.

THE COACH HOUSE
GALLERY / STUDIO
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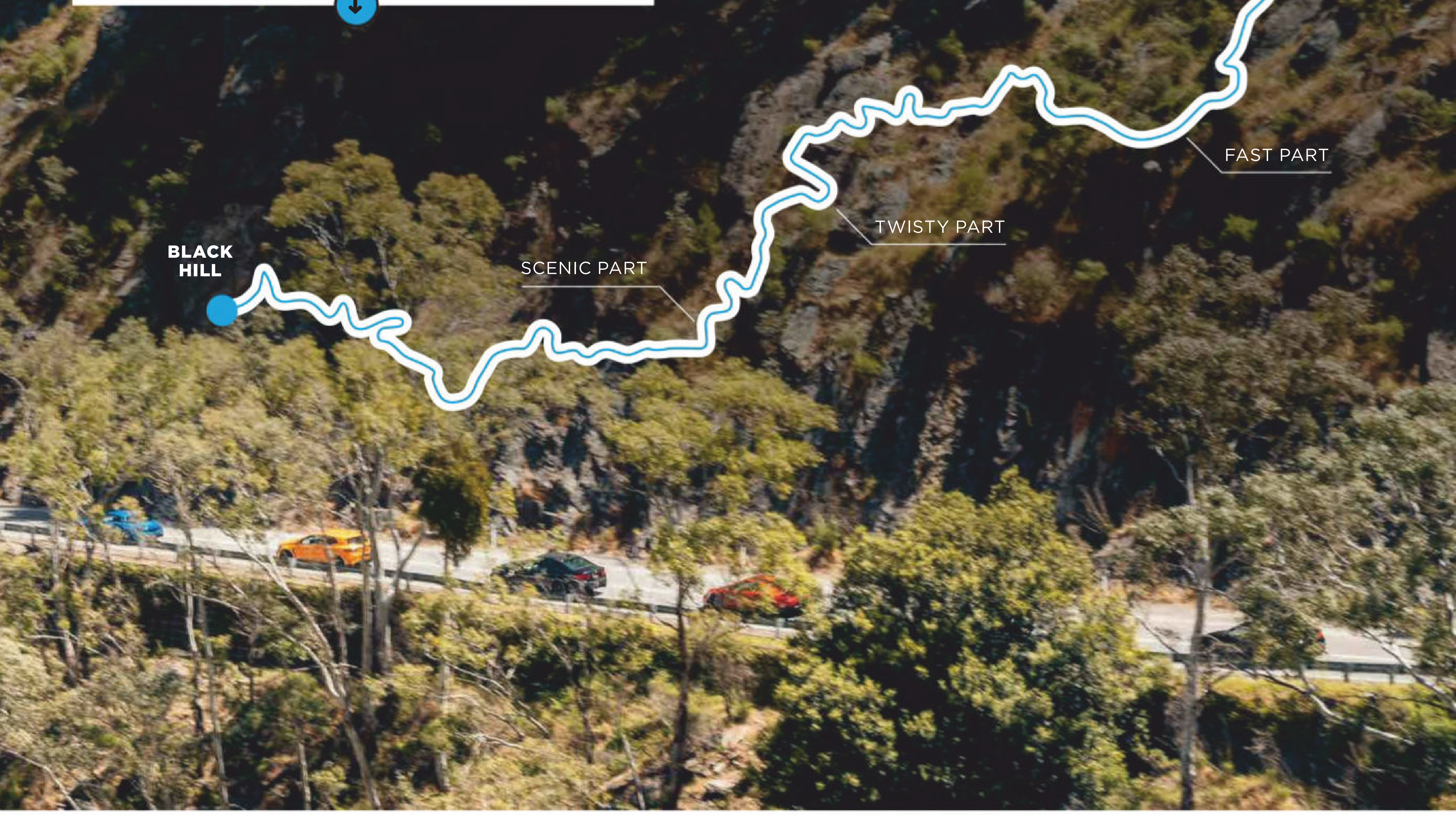
WHOLEFOODS



that will go down in history as South Korea's first proper performance car. Despite having done lots of kays in Ns over the past few months, I'm still amazed at how effortless it can be when you're on a transit stage, yet can still instantly turn it on when you want to play. Yes, the switchable drive modes have a bit to do with that, but the inherent balance and sheer accessibility play a big part, too.

For back-to-back purposes, I then grabbed the Renault to see if it could match the Hyundai for versatility. The Megane is good, make no mistake, but I don't think it quite nails the fast road-car brief quite as well as the i30. The ergonomics are still puzzling (the cruise main switch down near the cup holders, for instance) and it's just not quite as easy to grab by the nads and start throwing it around. The four-wheel-steering thing is actually very good, though, and allows you to back her into bends like a pro. There's evidence of more top-end squirt, too. I'm beginning to think the Megane might make a bit of a mess of the Hyundai on the track.

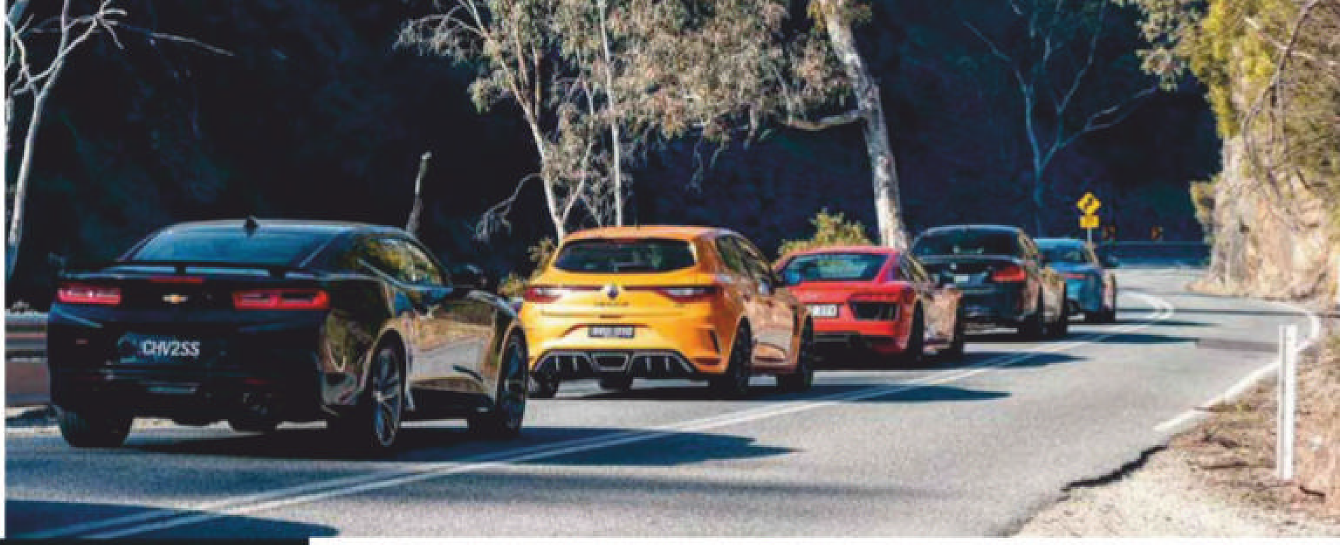
ABOVE
It's non-stop twists and turns, huge variety of surfaces and amazing scenery made Gorge Road a PCOTY highlight

LEFT
The Camaro might be the muscle car, but it's the GT2 RS that has the biggest biceps of any car here

Towards the end of the day, I found myself in the Audi RS4. Now, it's not that I'm not impressed by this car as a concept, but set among the other bling parked at the side of the road, the RS4, even in bright red, just kind of got lost a bit. But that stealth thing is such a lovely part of the Audi's schtick that it's hardly a criticism. And then you drive it.

Hoo-ey, this thing is polished. Look up a dictionary and 'resolved' is spelled 'RS4'. It's lovely to sit in with that El Fabbo virtual cockpit and the rest of the trim and equipment make it a soothing, comfy place to be. But even that pales when you get stuck in and the 331kW of the turbo V6 are revealed to be ready and waiting for your throttle-call. The eight-speed automatic works as well as one of these ever did, and after the pummelling suspension of some of this batch of hotties, the RS4 is dead-set armchair perfect.

This combination of balls and civility was all brought back home to right at the end of the day when a few of the cars, the RS4 included, started to get a bit dry in the tank department.



ABOVE
Two Germans, two Frenchmen and an American drive down a road… the performance car world is a diverse one

So a pack of us hustled them down the hill into the back of Adelaide for a top-up; a process that only further cemented my view of the Audi's brilliance. Even if it looked like any other sales-rep's Audi wagon in the car park of our overnight digs in the German-inspired town of Hahndorf.

Within all this, we'd locked onto a little road loop just off the main LA-canyon-esque road we'd been using and it was the wee side road that allowed us to soak up a bit more of each car. And while a few cars emerged pretty much as expected from the rest of the drive, a few really gave up their souls on this side track.

Not the least of those was the AMG GT C, which started to feel, to some of us, that its suspension wasn't perhaps quite as sorted as we'd hoped. Certainly the bigger bumps didn't fry its brain, but the smaller, pattery gear somehow made it feel less composed. Okay, so a stiff ride is an AMG branding thing, I know, but it did mean you weren't always as keen to hoik the GT C in hard, purely because you weren't confident that it would soak it all up. Not that you were constantly thinking about a crash scenario, but with big days in the saddle, sometimes just saving your kidneys another smashing is incentive enough to back off the throttle. And this is where 16-hour PCOTY road days really sort things out.

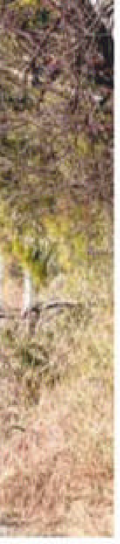
BMW's M5 Competition is another great example of this. Yes, it's blisteringly fast both in a straight line and mid-corner, but in the BMW's case it was the relatively distant dude-to-car connection that made you consider your entry-speed options. Hell, it'll go around a corner faster than I'll ever need it to, but, like a millennial will tell you, it's nice to be told that you're doing well. In this case, the M5 Competition was giving up nothing of the sort.

It wasn't exactly road-loop two, cars nil, but what happened

ABOVE
Both the cabin-back GT C and TCR-esque Megane RS gained praise for their exterior designs despite cabin flaws

TOP RIGHT
Fuel stops are often the biggest logistical headache of PCOTY, with 12 cars and 15 crew all needing sustenance

THE R8 RWS'S FORTE IS THE LEVEL OF COMMUNICATION AND ACCESSIBILITY IT GIVES OFF



HEY, BIG DRINKER

Which car got closest to its claimed consumption?

RANK	VEHICLE	CLAIMED*	MEASURED	DIFFERENCE
1	HYUNDAI I30 N	8.0L/100km	11.4L/100km	+3.4L
2	BMW M2 COMPETITION	9.2L/100km	16.3L/100km	+7.1L
3	ALPINE A110	6.2L/100km	13.4L/100km	+7.2L
4	RENAULT MEGANE RS280	7.2L/100km	14.5L/100km	+7.3L
5	PORSCHE 911 GT2 RS	11.8L/100km	20.2L/100km	+8.4L
6	AUDI RS4 AVANT	8.9L/100km	18.5L/100km	+9.6L
7	CHEVROLET CAMARO 2SS	11.6L/100km	21.3L/100km	+9.7L
8	FORD MUSTANG GT	13.0L/100km	22.8L/100km	+18.6L
9	MERCEDES-AMG GT C	11.4L/100km	22.3L/100km	+12.1L
10	BMW M5 COMPTETITION	10.8L/100km	22.2L/100km	+11.4L
11	AUDI R8 V10 RWS	12.4L/100km	25.7L/100km	+13.3L

*Combined urban/freeway fuel consumption.

DVA·11R
V10 FSI

next put things into perspective. Because that's when I climbed down into the Audi R8. Now, my experience of this type of platform and rear-drive was a Lamborghini Balboni at PCOTY a few years back which immediately reminded me why they make 'em all-paw. It was scary-sketchy, so I wasn't expecting a whole lot from the R8 RWS.

Boy, was I wrong. Okay, I can see how losing the front drive axle might make a difference on the track, but on the road, it just made the thing ultra-playful; able to wag its tail if you wanted, but also mega-fast if you used your skill and judgment. And having the front tyres steer rather than steer *and* drive has done the steering feel no harm at all. In fact, that's this car's forte; the level of communication and accessibility it gives off.

The other car that shone on our little side-route was the M2 Competition. The M2 has been my fave BMW since it was launched and the Competition is even better. But on the undulations and weird radii of this little road, the short-wheelbase M2 was surely in its element. How that will translate to the track is a guess at best, but on the road, it's magic. Oh, and it's stealthy enough that the unmarked VF full of coppers going the other way never looked twice.

My last two road drives were reserved for the Camaro and the Mustang. Makes sense, too, because a back-to-back of this pair was always calling. Again, the day was drawing to an end and I was brain-baked. So the Camaro was a nice, comfy, familiar thing that goes like a good 'un but didn't require you to be cracking the whip. The ride didn't wow me, however, and the auto seemed pretty aloof. The track tomorrow would tell us more about that stuff.

The final photos taken, the *MOTOR* crew headed for a local restaurant. Meanwhile, I'm too frazzled to bother, so I hit the road in the Mustang and headed for the old sub-station for beddy-byes. It clearly doesn't have the stomp of the Chevy and while it is faster than the previous 'Stang, you only discover that when you rev it right out. At road speeds, using road revs, it feels no faster than the old car. I'm also starting to wonder about the 10-speed auto, too. Seems like this engine could make do with five gears and less leap-frogging between ratios, because as it is, there's just too much going on.

There was also too much going on as I hit the final on-ramp and booted the Ford up onto the plane. Too much police presence, anyway, and just as I reached cruising velocity, there he was, a highway patrol car parked in the median strip, pointed my way. And no, he didn't. We love you South Australia.

BELOW
After a hard day of driving expensive cars, the PCOTY crew decided to kick back by standing around doing stuff all

A BACK-TO-BACK DRIVE OF THE CAMARO AND MUSTANG WAS ALWAYS CALLING

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HANKOOK

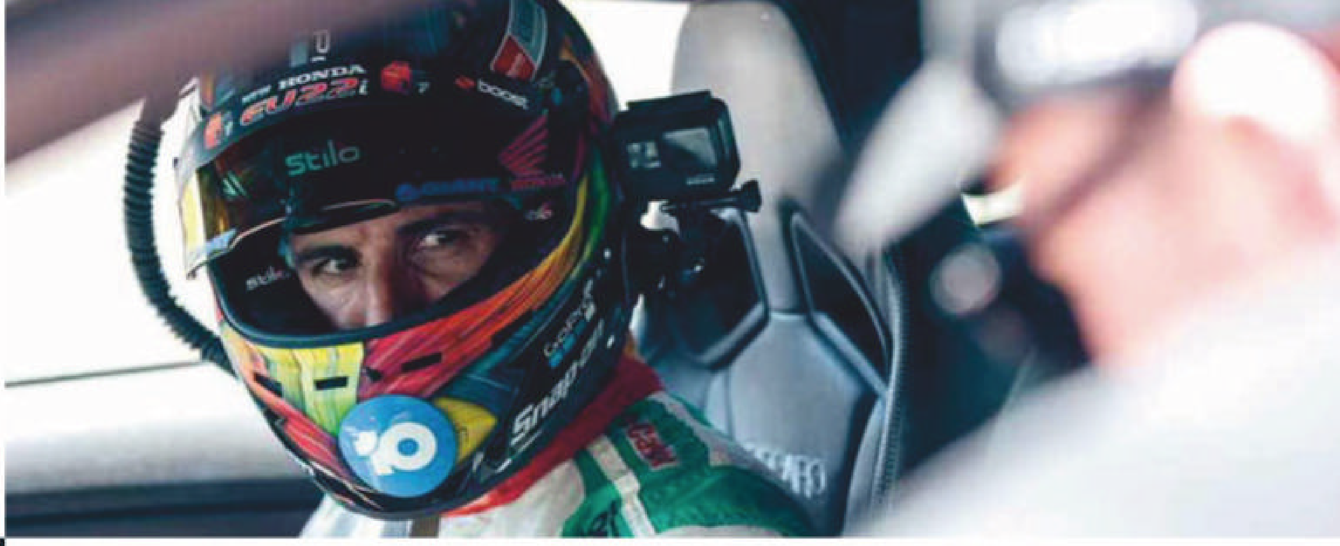
MOTOR PERFORMANCE CAR OF THE YEAR 2019

track

MIND BENDING

BY SCOTT NEWMAN + **PICS** ELLEN DEWAR/ALASTAIR BROOK

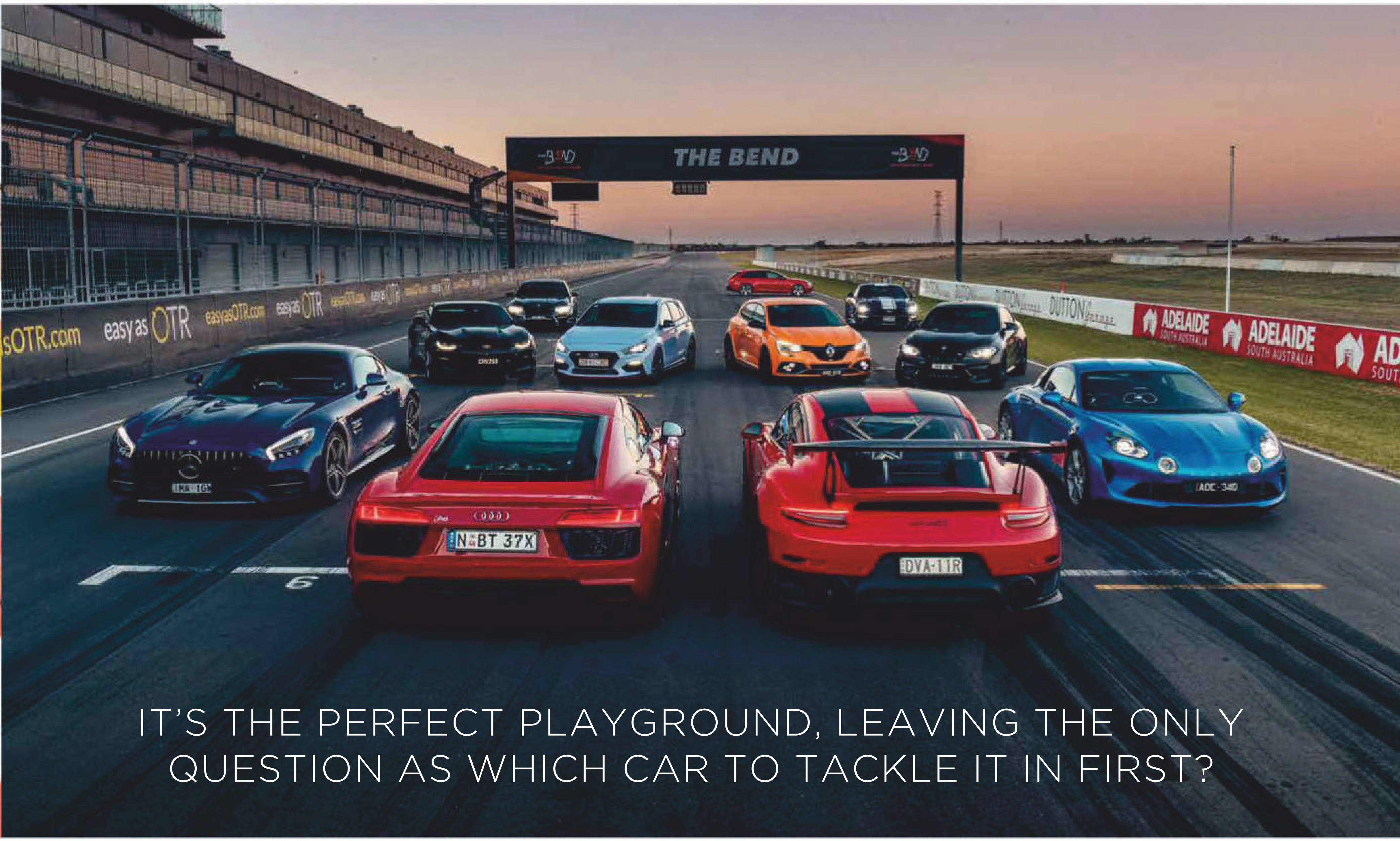
DYNAMIC SURPRISES LIE AT THE LIMIT AND BEYOND AS WE BLITZ THE BEND, AUSTRALIA'S HOTTEST NEW TRACK



THE ROAD FROM Melbourne to Adelaide is never going to rank on anyone's 'greatest drives' list. When the highlight is a giant, crazy-eyed Koala you know attractions are few and far between. Meanwhile, most other motorists delight in that Aussie road trip tradition – driving 10km/h below the speed limit only to channel their inner Lewis Hamilton at the first sight of an overtaking lane.

Regardless of whether it's your final destination, The Bend Motorsport Park is well worth a visit to break up the tedium. It's a petrolhead oasis, offering good food (salad! At a racetrack!), a lobby full of drool-worthy exotics and historically important racecars, not to mention the lure of the world's second-longest permanent racetrack.

The Bend offers a variety of layouts, the headline act being the 37-corner, 7.77km GT circuit. We considered using it for PCOTY, but even if all the judges managed to avoid getting lost (no sure thing) the length of the lap is such that we'd still be testing now. The International circuit, used by Supercars, was also tempting thanks to its super-quick, triple-apex sweeper



IT'S THE PERFECT PLAYGROUND, LEAVING THE ONLY QUESTION AS WHICH CAR TO TACKLE IT IN FIRST?

ABOVE
It's a special experience waking up to see a racetrack from your hotel room… 11 performance cars also adds to the view

and gnarly, uphill, blind-exit right. In the end, though, the West Circuit offered everything we needed.

At 3.41km it's 410m longer than our traditional Winton test track and its 12 turns (four left and eight right) range from an acute hairpin to a top-of-fourth-gear kink with decent elevation change and a variety of cambers thrown in for good measure. Bar the big stop at the end of the 1km straight, it's not super tough on brakes and its freshly laid surface is relatively easy on rubber, with only the M5's rear tyres showing significant wear – but more on that later. All in all, the perfect production car playground, leaving the only question as which car to tackle it in first?

The sensible approach is to start at the slow end of town and gradually increase the pace. Trouble is, PCOTY rookie Rick wants to do the same and has commandeered the hot hatches, so what to choose? The M5 has the surety of all-wheel drive, but best to leave the tyres and brakes fresh for Rick. The GT2 RS won't have any such durability issues, but 515kW is a bit much first thing in the morning. The RS4? Ah, the Mustang.

The previous-gen 'Stang was a bit soft to be a track star, yet had enough grip, grunt and brakes to be a lot of fun – in the dry, anyway. Select Track mode and the MY18 is a much sharper tool. The MagneRide dampers stiffen, the steering weights up and the transmission is set to maximum attack, the revs barely dropping as the 5.0-litre V8 snarls through gear after gear.

There's not a whole lot of feedback from either end of the chassis, but the adaptive suspension and Michelin rubber combine to offer much sharper responses and greater predictability. This new Mustang is much more interested in grip than slip, requiring real commitment to hang its tail out in the time-honoured muscle-car style. It's fun… briefly. Sadly, the Mustang can't even complete two flying laps before the gearbox overheats, cutting power and refusing any shifts. This lack of stamina is a serious shortcoming for a car that many owners will expect to be able to use on track.

Transmission woes prove to be the Camaro's Achilles' Heel on track, too, albeit for a different reason. Unlike its Blue Oval rival, the Chevy will complete lap after lap without complaint,

LEFT
R8 RWS loves to oversteer, but it's not easy, that big V10 keen to overtake the front if your inputs are too aggressive

ABOVE
Racer Rick felt right at home in the GT2 RS, but said it felt quicker than his Nissan Supercar in a straight line – geez!

LEFT
Megane fared better on track than on road and was the quicker of the two hot hatches, but the Hyundai remained more fun

but its eight-speed auto's steadfast refusal to downshift is an ugly fly in an otherwise tasty soup. Manual requests are routinely ignored and left to its own devices the gearbox will only select the right gear once you've applied throttle on corner exit. It's a shame as the Camaro is otherwise very enjoyable. It feels bigger, heavier and softer than the Mustang, but its greater adjustability – via brakes or throttle – makes it arguably more fun. Love the engine, too.

The RS4 is not at home on a racetrack. The extra suspension compliance that makes it such an effective road car works against it here; even in Dynamic mode it rolls significantly and this fast family hauler doesn't have the tyres or the brakes to effectively rein in its weight. Likewise, that torquey twin-turbo V6 continues to deliver effortless pace, but feels 500rpm short of the real deal on track.

Up to a certain point the RS4 is enjoyable; it's happy to adjust its balance on corner entry and the diffs shuffle power around beautifully, however, it ultimately starts to run out of ideas just when you want it to come alive.

Unlike the Hyundai, which absolutely loves the track. The Bend's fast, flowing nature exposes its lack of top-end grunt – the straight feels *v-e-r-y* long – but the i30 N goes where you want it to go and does what you want it to do. It's not overly adjustable, particularly in the stiffest damper setting, which has this hot hatch hopping even on The Bend's dead-level surface, but you're having too much fun going as quickly as possible to really care. Get the line right and the turn five kink can be taken flat at 170km/h, yet if you do stuff it up the i30 isn't going to spit you off in spite.

The Alpine is not quite so forgiving. Rick returned from his laps swearing, having had the A110 slide sideways big time through the kink at high speed. It seems Alpine's engineers have attempted to replicate its iconic predecessor's rear-engined dynamics, as the A110 is incredibly sensitive to pitch. Too much throttle lifts the nose and generates power understeer, while trail-braking is to be avoided unless you're happy to drive on the lock-stops. At the absolute limit it's a handful, but drive purely for fun and the A110 is a riot. It sounds brilliant, is faster than you think and needs only the slightest provocation to traverse every corner in a glorious arc of oversteer. Best of all, because it's so light, tyre and brake wear are virtually non-existent.

Renault's more traditional challenger, the Megane RS280, feels more at home on track, but it still lacks the magic of its predecessor. The chassis displays remarkable composure at speed, its grip and accuracy making nailing apexes easy. However, the engine feels breathless at the top end, there's little evidence of the Megane's traditional adjustability and the much-vaunted bi-material brakes give up way too easily. Very disappointing indeed.

Disappointing certainly isn't the right word for the M2 Competition. Amazing is much closer to the mark. The

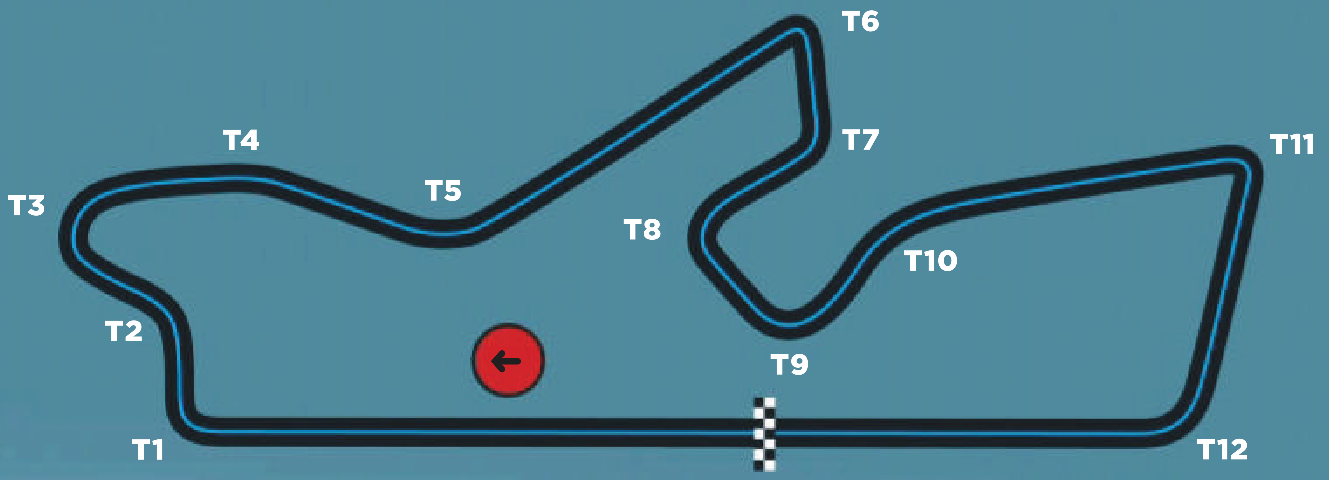
3.41KM OF PURE ADRENALINE

PCOTY heads to Australia's newest racetrack

THE BEND'S West Circuit is probably its easiest configuration, but that doesn't make it easy. Picking the appropriate braking marker for T1 is crucial as you're arriving at around 215km/h in the i30 N and about 270km/h in the GT2 RS.

There are a number of lines through T2 and T3 and it's a perfect place to hang the tail out. T4 is just an acceleration zone, T5 requires a dab of brake and rewards the brave before approaching the hairpin at high speed.

At this point the Supercars turn left but we hook around and rejoin the main track via the tricky off-camber T7. T8 is blind on exit and the long T9 requires patience to ensure a good run over the T10 crest down to the tight T11. T12 looks tighter than it is and it's important to carry as much speed as possible down that long main straight.



PCOTY *Time* ATTACK

RICK KELLY'S LEADERBOARD

WEST CIRCUIT

1	**PORSCHE 911 GT2 RS**	1:24.0SEC
2	**MERCEDES-AMG GT C**	1:27.3SEC
3	**AUDI R8 RWS**	1:28.5SEC
4	**BMW M5 COMPETITION**	1:30.8SEC
5	**BMW M2 COMPETITION**	1:31.0SEC
6	**CHEVROLET CAMARO 2SS**	1:32.3SEC
=7	**AUDI RS4 AVANT**	1:34.0SEC
=7	**FORD MUSTANG GT**	1:34.0SEC
9	**ALPINE A110**	1:35.2SEC
10	**RENAULT MEGANE RS280**	1:36.3SEC
11	**HYUNDAI i30 N**	1:37.3SEC

standard M2 is great on track, but feels to have M-car grip without M-car grunt. The twin-turbo S55 re-balances the ledger beautifully, while the optional brakes also impress with their resistance to fade. Perhaps most surprising, though, is the M2 Comp's communication and cohesiveness. Want to drive a neat, tidy lap? The baby Beemer has the grip and accuracy to oblige, but if you want to set the tyres on fire at 100km/h it's more than up for that, too. In short, it gives you options, while also sounding great and being bloody quick.

Perhaps it's not surprising that despite two extra driven wheels and another 158kW, the M5 Competition could only beat its little brother by 0.2sec. What is surprising is how much more of a handful this super sedan is at the limit. Combine a chassis that's extremely eager to rotate on corner entry with an all-wheel drive system that feels to artificially promote oversteer and the result is a constant flurry of steering corrections to keep the beast pointing in the intended direction, all while accelerating at warp speed. The straight-line pace of the M5 is phenomenal, but the soundtrack is weird, the steering vague and in 4WD Sport it feels like it's trying too hard to entertain. Of course, if it's entertainment you want, simply select 2WD and revel in what must be the world's easiest car to powerslide. Childish, yes, but a right laugh.

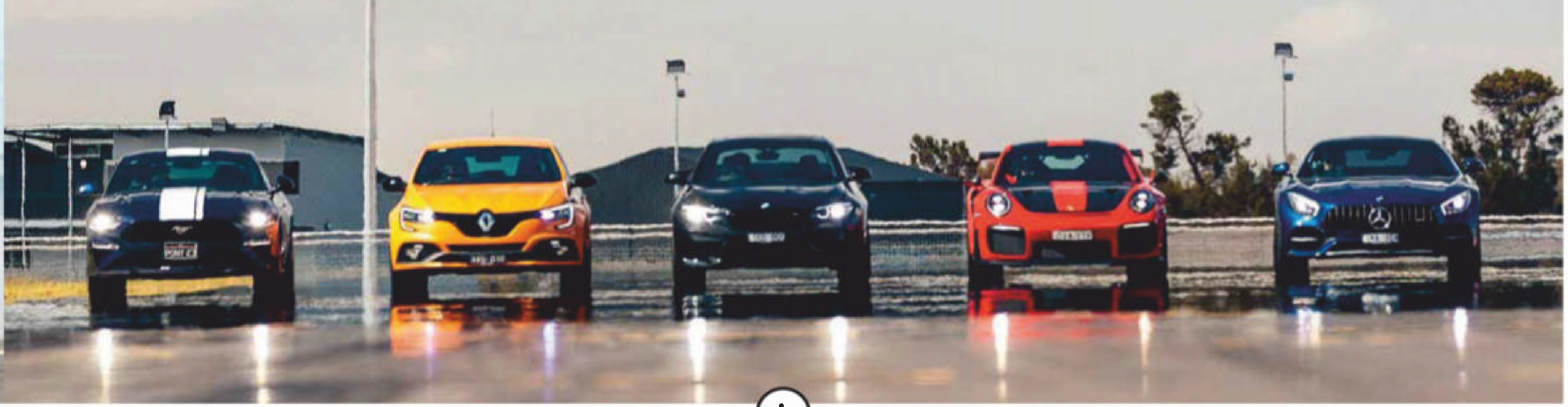
There's nothing funny about the AMG GT C; it is a very serious sports car that comes into its own at the track. With proper temperature in its giant Michelin Cup 2 tyres and no bumps to worry about, it feels a lot more cohesive than on the road. Right at the limit the edginess returns, which is not ideal as you're going at a fearsome lick, but in general there's so much tyre supporting the chassis that you can make full use of the insane powertrain. Driving a GT C flat-out is a physical, breathtaking experience, the lateral and longitudinal g-forces blending with the sensory assault of its speed and soundtrack.

Whereas the AMG is a brute, the R8 RWS is much more delicate. As you'd expect, Audi's supercar is capable of tremendous speed, cornering flat with fantastic brakes, beautiful steering and a drivetrain to die for. It all feels fantastic, until you overstep the limit, at which point you suddenly and vividly remember the 5.2-litre V10 behind you and the relatively sensible tyre specification. Personally, this makes me love it even more. If you want to extract the absolute best out of this supercar, you have to bring your A-game. Clumsy inputs are punished, but get it right by carrying the perfect amount of brake pressure to the apex and exiting with a quarter-turn of opposite lock and you'll wonder if driving can get any better than this.

But it can. It will surprise no one that the GT2 RS was an absolute monster on track. It simply blew everything else away, clocking a time 3.3sec clear of the second-placed AMG GT C, itself an absolutely ball-tearing performance car. Its straight-

IT STILL REQUIRES RESPECT, BUT IT SHOULDN'T BE THIS EASY TO DRIFT A 515KW 911. I NEED A LIE DOWN

BELOW When the fastest car *MOTOR* has ever tested lines up for a run, you're guaranteed to draw a crowd



AT THE DRAGS: 0-100KM/H, 0-400M

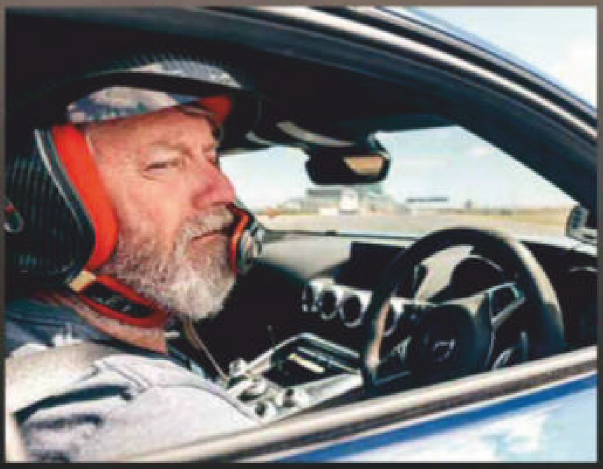
For those who live their lives a quarter mile at a time

FOR MOST of the year we test on an unprepped dragstrip, valiantly searching for skerricks of leftover VHT among the hard-baked layers of discarded rubber. A warm, freshly laid racetrack is like superglue in comparison, hence the 11 sets of impressive numbers before you. The Alpine is easily the least powerful car on test, but with just 1103kg to propel the A110 is surprisingly potent, shooting to 100km/h in 4.79sec and maintaining its momentum to clock a 12.90sec quarter mile at 179.84km/h.

It runs the far more powerful M2 Competition close, the baby Beemer managing 4.5sec to 100km/h before stretching its advantage over the quarter with a 12.52sec effort at 182.57km/h. Those figures aren't much quicker than the standard M2, but the S55 sounds and feels stronger. Braking isn't a strong point, however, its 36.61m 100-0km/h stop the longest of the whole field and two metres longer than the Alpine.

The Camaro makes a strong bang-for-your-bucks case. For $20K less than the M2 it offers very similar pace. It trails by a couple of tenths to 100km/h (4.73sec) and over 400m (12.72sec), but its 186.35km/h means it's running the BMW down. Impressive brakes, too, with a remarkable 32.45m 100-0km/h stop.

But when it comes to value, the Mustang is king. Our test car is heavily optioned, but there's no reason a standard V8 auto couldn't manage 4.65sec 0-100km/h and a 12.64sec quarter mile at 188.91km/h. Shorter ratios give it a roll-on acceleration advantage over the Camaro, dispatching 80-120km/h in 2.3sec rather than 2.5sec, but it also impresses by stopping from 100-0km/h in 33.86m.



You could throw a blanket over the hot hatches. The Renault has the edge to 100km/h, its 5.98sec bettering the Hyundai's 6.25sec, but just 0.07sec separate the two at 400m (Renault 14.22sec; Hyundai 14.29sec) with the Megane carrying just 2km/h more speed. From 80-120km/h the two are identical at 3.7sec, while the Megane stops six centimetres shorter than the i30 N from 100km/h (33.71m vs 33.77m). Given the Hyundai's lower price, it's a good result.

At this point driver skill takes a back seat, the remaining five cars relying on launch control. The RS4 Avant couldn't be easier, its twin-turbo V6 and all-wheel drive making it effortlessly the quickest car so far with 0-100km/h in 3.87sec and a 12.02sec quarter mile. Still, its 187.25km/h trap speed can't match the Mustang, nor can its 2.4sec effort from 80-120km/h.

Strange as it may seem given the numbers, the M5 Competition's launch control wouldn't play ball. Its 3.78sec 0-100km/h is fairly ballistic, but well short of its 3.3sec claim, and subsequently 11.53sec is a couple of tenths shy of its ultimate potential, too. Nonetheless, a 203.09km/h trap speed and 80-120km/h in 1.8sec illustrates just how ludicrously fast this Bavarian monster is. Braking is strong for a near two-tonne car at 34.59m, though the RS4 bests it at 34.28m.

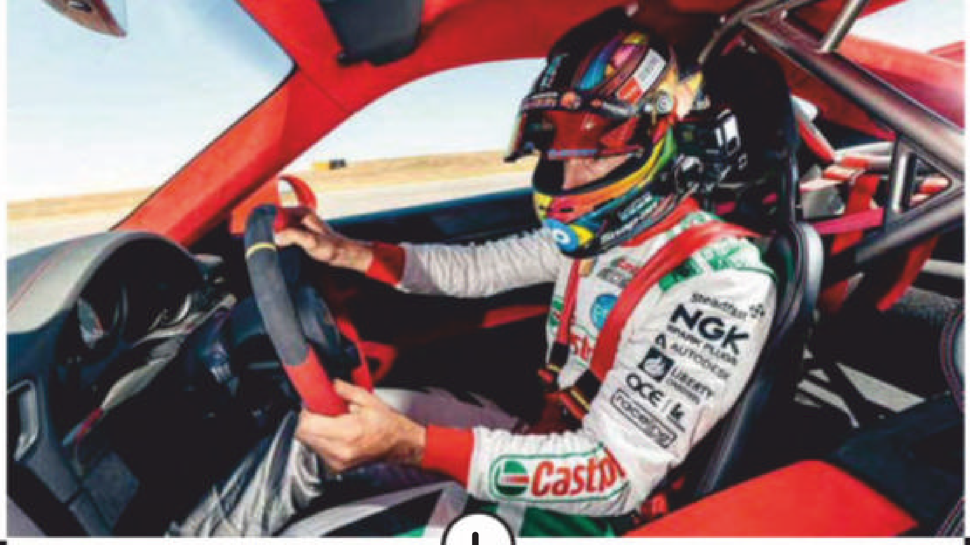
Undoubtedly the surprise packet of the whole field is the Audi R8 V10 RWS. With just two-wheel drive and the less powerful of Audi's two V10 tunes it has no right to clock 0-100km/h in 3.57sec (0.13sec quicker than its claim). From there it only gets quicker, rocketing through 400m in 11.35sec at an incredible 206.87km/h. Overtaking from 80-120km/h matches the M5 at 1.8sec, while 100-0km/h requires just 31.24m.

The AMG GT C feels faster, but isn't. Not that 0-100km/h in 3.66sec and an 11.55sec quarter mile at 204.34km/h is anything to sneeze at. Its carbon brakes also take time to build temperature, resulting in a 35.33m 100-0km/h stop, while less opportune gearing is responsible for the 2.1sec 80-120km/h time. Anything capable of these numbers is well into the realms of insanity.

Which means the Porsche 911 GT2 RS needs to be locked up, Hannibal Lecter style. On the one hand the ultimate Porker disappointed, missing its 0-100km/h claim by 0.33sec, more than any other car bar the M5. On the other hand, it still blew the field away with a 3.13sec time, despite plenty of wheelspin off the line. The rest of the numbers are just laughable, the GT2 RS existing on a different performance plane. Its 10.63sec quarter mile at 220.85km/h makes it the quickest car we've ever tested – as in, *ever ever* – while its 1.5sec 80-120km/h time is also a benchmark, as is the 30.12m stop from 100-0km/h. That's the 'Performance' criteria nailed, then.

WHO WAS FASTEST AT THE STRIP?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
PORSCHE 911 GT2 RS	**AUDI R8 RWS**	**BMW M5 COMP**	**AMG GT C**	**AUDI RS4**	**BMW M2 COMP**	**FORD MUSTANG**	**CHEV COMARO**	**ALPINE A110**	**RENAULT MEGANE**	**HYUNDAI i30 N**
10.63s	11.36s	11.53s	11.55s	12.02s	12.52s	12.64s	12.72s	12.90s	14.22s	14.29s
@ 220.85km/h	@ 206.87km/h	@ 203.09km/h	@ 204.34km/h	@ 187.25km/h	@ 182.57km/h	@ 188.91km/h	@ 186.35km/h	@ 179.84km/h	@ 166.02km/h	@ 164.26km/h



line speed is astonishing, clocking 270km/h down the main straight (20km/h quicker than the M5, for example) with no hint of slowing, yet you can confidently brake as late as in any other car. Lateral grip is outrageous, its precision unmatched and still it will complete lap after lap after lap without breaking a sweat. Unlike the wide-eyed driver. The only chink in its armour comes on the tricky braking approach to the hairpin, where a change in surface triggers the ABS and lengthens the braking distance quite dramatically.

Undoubtedly the 911's greatest attribute, though, is its user-friendliness. The intimidating nature of its looks, sound and speed are at complete odds with its benign nature at the limit. A hefty helping of steering slides the rear, at which point 750Nm start eviscerating those 325mm-wide Michelins. It still requires respect, for at smaller slip angles the GT2 will happily oversteer while accelerating at a fearsome rate, but it shouldn't be this easy to drift a 500kW-plus 911. I need a lie down.

THE RACER'S VIEW

Rick Kelly's track impressions

1 **PORSCHE 911 GT2 RS:** "Jeez, this thing's got a lot of grunt. It feels like a racecar on a road tyre. Like a Supercar, on a wet tyre, on a dry track. It just wants a race tyre underneath it. It made me smile"

2 **MERCEDES-AMG GT C:** "If I could change one thing, it would be to quicken the steering so when the rear does do something you weren't expecting, you can correct it quickly. It's a car you have to respect due to its power"

3 **AUDI R8 RWS:** "It's so fast, and there's not a lot of grip in the middle of the corner, so it forces you to work at it to get the best outcome. It's got a beautiful engine/gearbox and hearing that V10 behind your left ear is special"

4 **BMW M5 COMPETITION:** "It's big and luxurious, but it goes places, fast! Sounds incredible and the shifts are super precise. It's the entry/heavy turning phase in slower corners it struggles with; I think that's simply the weight"

5 **BMW M2 COMPETITION:** "What a little monster! You get some understeer, but then you stand on the throttle and it's got enough grunt to power slide on exit. Nicely balanced, easy to control a slide. Just a whole heap of fun"

6 **CHEVROLET CAMARO 2SS:** "A typical, big, American muscle car with a heap of noise and big V8 power. I found the steering too heavy; corrections were difficult at times. Gearbox downshifts also not quick enough into corners"

7 **AUDI RS4 AVANT:** "Fair bit of body roll and a lot of entry/mid-corner understeer, which you end up waiting for before you can get on the throttle. It feels like too much of a road car to perform well on track. It sounds incredible"

8 **FORD MUSTANG GT:** "It has a nice, firm brake pedal and brakes well, but it produces more entry and mid-corner understeer than the Camaro, and has a lot less throttle oversteer. It's enjoyable, predictable and feels really nice"

9 **ALPINE A110:** "You'd expect quite a consistent balance, but on track, it can produce some pretty difficult situations in terms of car control due to entry oversteer. Engine and power were really sweet, as was the gearbox on upshifts"

10 **RENAULT MEGANE RS280:** "All the controls are well suited to track-day use – steering weight, pedal layout and gearing. Suffered from understeer; no real oversteer to speak of. Nice, consistent balance without any nasty traits"

11 **HYUNDAI i30 N:** "It feels like a nice, little, stiff car, but the compound of the tyre felt hard and, as a result, you don't get the braking grip you want. It also resulted in quite heavy understeer, or what I call, shudder understeer... you can feel the vibration through the car"

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FALKEN
ON THE PULSE

11th

Hankook MOTOR PERFORMANCE CAR OF THE YEAR

JUDGES	DC	LC	RK	DM	SN	TOTAL
PERFORMANCE	15.5	11.5	14	15	15	71
DYNAMICS	14.5	10	12	13	14	63.5
ACCESSIBILITY	7	7.5	7	7	8.5	37
LIVEABILITY	6.5	4	6	6	6	28.5
VALUE	7	4.5	8	6	6	31.5
X FACTOR	7.5	6.5	6	8	8	36
TOTALS	58	44	53	55	57.5	267.5

CHEVROLET CAMARO 2SS

Locally converted GM hero more fun than the result suggests

IT'S THE sad reality of any contest that someone has to come last and at PCOTY 2019 that dubious honour goes to the Chevrolet Camaro. It's unlikely to placate the disappointed folks at HSV, but we prefer to think of it as 11th – as Morley says, it beat everything that's not here. The Chevy is also an enjoyable muscle car that's unlikely to disappoint anyone in the market for such a thing.

PCOTY is not a comparison test per se, but given the similarity between the Camaro and Mustang in intended function, it's inevitable comparisons will be drawn between the two. However, while the two are rear-drive V8 coupes tugging at emotional heartstrings, each delivers a remarkably different driving experience.

The Camaro is much more of a traditional muscle car. Its 6.2-litre LT1 V8 feels lazier, producing peak power at 5700rpm, but compensates with massive mid-range torque, not to mention a thunderous soundtrack. There's greater body roll in corners and less precision to the handling, yet the firm ride is a constant reminder of its sporting intentions. The steering is very heavy in its standard mode and only gets more so if you adjust it; thankfully, it can be adjusted independently of the powertrain.

There's the sense HSV's ride and handling team would love to get their hands on the Camaro – cushion the ride, lighten the steering, sharpen its responses – particularly as there is such an impressive base to work with. While it feels big and heavy, the Chevy is benign and adjustable when driven hard; on track it was the pick of the muscle cars for me, purely because its softness gave it an adjustability the Mustang lacked. It also happily soaked up the abuse; even the brakes held up well.

Unfortunately, circuit work only exacerbated the Camaro's biggest flaw – its transmission. This eight-speed auto is one of the most frustrating gearboxes ever encountered, more often than not ignoring seemingly reasonable downshift requests with the obstinacy of a surly teenager. Even left to its own devices it would wait until throttle was applied on corner exit before picking the appropriate gear. Hopefully the MY19 Camaro's new 10-speed is quicker-witted.

In the final reckoning, the Chevrolet proved itself a very good car, but not a great one. It scored well across most of the criteria without being a stand out in any area, but its ride and visibility hampered its liveability score and the value equation is a struggle.

When you see how much work goes into converting the Camaro, it's remarkable HSV can offer it at $85,990, but when its abilities are so similar to a car costing up to $20K less, it's always going to come off second best. – *SN*

THE NUMBERS

0-100KM/H
4.73
SEC

0-400KM/H
12.72
SEC @ 186.35KM/H

LAP TIME
1:31.0

JUDGE'S RANK

CAMPBELL
10TH
If your only desires are a thumping V8 in a svelte body, you'll love the Camaro.

CORDONY
11TH
A reincarnated coupe Commodore SS, with some working issues.

MORLEY
11TH
Wasn't my favourite, but those who 'get' it will buy it.

NEWMAN
9TH
Great looks, grunty engine, fun chassis, just needs a gearbox.

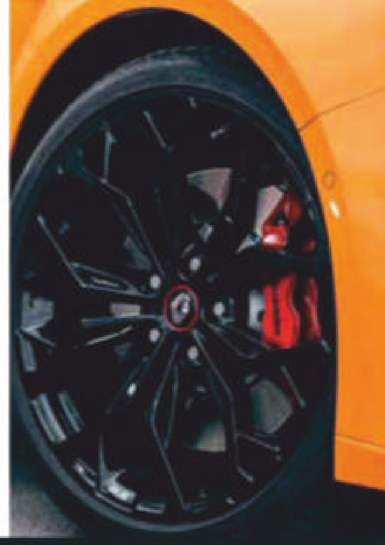
KELLY
10TH
Great to look at, enjoyable to drive, old-school drivetrain.

THE CHEVY CAMARO PROVED ITSELF TO BE A VERY GOOD CAR, BUT NOT A GREAT ONE

2019

10th

Hankook
MOTOR
PERFORMANCE
CAR OF THE YEAR



JUDGES	DC	LC	RK	DM	SN	TOTAL
PERFORMANCE	15.5	11.5	14	15	15	71
DYNAMICS	14.5	10	12	13	14	63.5
ACCESSIBILITY	7	7.5	7	7	8.5	37
LIVEABILITY	6.5	4	6	6	6	28.5
VALUE	7	4.5	8	6	6	31.5
X FACTOR	7.5	6.5	6	8	8	36
TOTALS	**58**	**44**	**53**	**55**	**57.5**	**267.5**

RENAULT MEGANE RS280

Hot hatch master chefs mess with a proven recipe

IF RENAULT SPORT was a restaurant, it's attracted a horde of return customers with its signature dish: the hot hatch. With a flavour and spice unlike anything else in town, this was one joint where you took your mates – and then later saw them bringing their own.

So imagine your horror if suddenly the food started tasting... different. And not good different. Perhaps it's here we can introduce the MkIV Clio RS, a car whose broadened appeal meant presumably more sales but a shift away from the core values of the enthusiasts to whom it owed its cred. Never mind, we had the *Megane* RS, one of the most involving hot hatches ever made. Eventually, though, there was going to be a new one, and we were all secretly worried it'd be a bit like just a bigger MkIV Clio RS.

Well, that's kind of what's happened – the Megane RS is no longer the hot hatch benchmark. In fact, and it pains us to say this, it's far from it. And this is reflected as much in its lowly 10th place finish, not really acceptable when a hot hatch – the Honda Civic Type R – managed to nab top honours at this very heated competition just last year.

It's not from a lack of pace – the Megane RS280, in more focused Cup guise as tested here, and six-speed manual, is a fair weapon on track, a whole second quicker than the i30 N – itself not a slow car. The Megane RS is also stable and loves the high speed stuff, and begs you to drive harder and harder into its chassis where huge grip abounds. It's just that it's all become a little... functional, rather than fun.

Personally, I desperately wanted to love the Megane RS, but struggled. I drove it repeatedly, and in as many different ways as I knew, trying to find the old magic. I glimpsed some fleeting remnants, but never tapped any vein. And neither really did the other judges.

That's not to say the Megane RS is a bad car, it just doesn't have the fizz of the old one. The engine is a bit flat and the handling a bit serious. The seating position is hard to like. The manual gearchange and clutch feel make you curious about the EDC, and the ride is a bit old school stiff.

There are redeeming virtues. Is this currently the best looking hot hatch on sale? It'd run it close, with those pumped guards, flush wheels and rear diffuser with a bit of inspo straight from Danny Ric's F1 racer. But sexy as it is, it's a bit of a new thing to buy a Megane RS just to look at. Yet, you don't really itch to *drive* this one. And isn't that what made the Megane RS so great to begin with? – *DC*

THE MEGANE RS IS NO LONGER THE HOT HATCH BENCHMARK – IT PAINS US TO SAY IT

THE NUMBERS

0-100KM/H
5.98
SEC

0-400KM/H
14.22
SEC @ 166.02KM/H

LAP TIME
1:36.3

JUDGE'S RANK

CAMPBELL
11TH
I was scared they'd do a MkIV Clio RS. They did a MkIV Clio RS.

CORDONY
9TH
Accomplished. Yet I want to like it so much more than I do.

MORLEY
9TH
Outshone by the Hyundai with change for beer and pies.

NEWMAN
11TH
Good, but not great. Engine feels flat, average brakes and chassis lacks cohesion

KELLY
9TH
Friendly, predictable, but needs more performance to match its looks.

JUDGES	DC	LC	RK	DM	SN	TOTAL
PERFORMANCE	15	11.5	16	15	13	70.5
DYNAMICS	14.5	11.5	14	15	14	69
ACCESSIBILITY	7.5	4	8	7	8	34.5
LIVEABILITY	8	6	6	7	7	33
VALUE	7.5	6	10	7	8	38.5
X FACTOR	7.5	8.5	6	7	7	36
TOTALS	**59**	**47.5**	**60**	**58**	**57**	**281.5**

FORD MUSTANG GT

New V8 hero trots, rather than gallops, over the finish line

IT'S CLEAR THAT if popularity decided the results at PCOTY this blue-collar hero would swagger its way up the rankings. For Ford, selling a rear-drive atmo 5.0-litre V8 in a rig this sexy is yielding the same kind of success as culling 'roos with a Minigun.

We were reminded of this when, with the 911 GT2 RS and Audi R8 V10 RWS in clear sight, a punter at The Bend picked it as the one car he would want a ride in.

We couldn't grant the poor bloke his wish, as the Mustang GT completed its hot laps a little too literally in Rick's hands and went into 'limp mode' after setting a respectable lap time. But he would have been a happy man hearing its engine rap its warcry off pit wall from the passenger seat. It's arguably the best sounding car for under $100K.

Upgraded heavily in 2018 form with better breathing and optimised internals its Coyote V8 revs to 7400rpm with the 10-speed auto. That's almost as hard as the fancy DOHC unit you'd find in a Lexus RC F twice its price, while 339kW and 556Nm means it'll give it a proper arm wrestle, too.

Although the new transmission couldn't hack the heat, it certainly delivered the goods when it counted on the strip. On the road you need to dig in the spurs for it to respond, and it'll fire down through the gears during hard braking, but it can also fumble with what gear to give you (can you blame it?) when pootling around at half attack.

Opinions divided on its handling. There's not much information coming through the tiller, despite the darty front-end, and its big rear Michelin Pilot Sport 4S tyres dominate the grip balance. Rick liked the predictability of its understeer into and out of corners, but the tied-down rear-end and lofty power peak means only the brave will try hang it out from the rear.

It's clear from the scores the judges rated it for value. But mystery surrounded whether the adaptive dampers make enough of a difference for $2750. They hold the car well laterally and add front purchase. However, it's hard to tell how much this car's optional forged alloys had to do with the improved ride over the standard suspension.

Technology crippled the Mustang's fun in the end. And herein lies its philosophy – peel back the fancy hardware and you'll find an honest, good looking and great sounding ponycar. But as the results show, even with movie-star looks and down-to-earth credentials, the judges didn't love it as much as the punters might. – *LC*

9th

THE NUMBERS

0-100KM/H
4.65
SEC

0-400KM/H
12.64
SEC @ 188.91KM/H

LAP TIME
1:34.0

JUDGE'S RANK

CAMPBELL
9TH
Good, but still not as dynamically capable as the VF II SS-V Redline was. And it should be.

CORDONY
10TH
Cooler than Ice Cube at the North Pole, but still no stunner to drive.

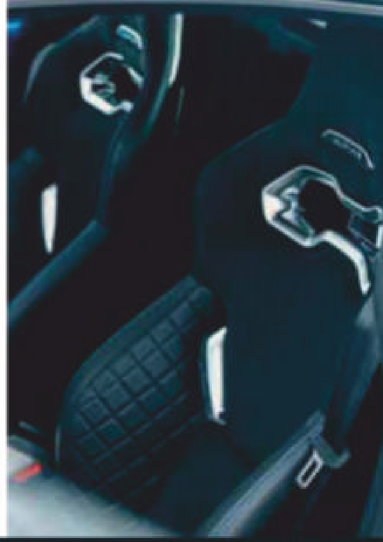
MORLEY
10TH
Extra power hard to reach and new auto leaves me wondering.

NEWMAN
10TH
Impressive pace useless if you're unable to use it.

KELLY
4TH
A head-turning daily driver that's great value for money.

Hankook MOTOR PERFORMANCE CAR OF THE YEAR

JUDGES	DC	LC	RK	DM	SN	TOTAL
PERFORMANCE	16.5	15	12	16	16	75.5
DYNAMICS	17.5	14	10	16	16	73.5
ACCESSIBILITY	6.5	6.5	6	7	7.5	33.5
LIVEABILITY	7	6.5	5	7	6.5	32
VALUE	7	6	4	8	6	31
X FACTOR	7.5	9	3	10	9	38.5
TOTALS	62	57	40	64	61	284



8th

THE NUMBERS

0-100KM/H
4.79
SEC

0-400KM/H
12.90
SEC @ 179.84KM/H

LAP TIME
1:35.2

JUDGE'S RANK

CAMPBELL
8TH
A very novel drive. Like an ND MX-5 with proper power and a roof.

CORDONY
4TH
Authentic. Pretty. Playful. Just my type.

MORLEY
=3RD
Wanted to cheer when I drove this but I was sideways at the time.

NEWMAN
7TH
A breath of fresh air in the increasingly polluted fast-car world.

KELLY
11TH
Not my cup of tea. I think I need a tour down history lane.

ALPINE
AOC · 340

ALPINE A110

Retro Frenchy dares to be different – but not everyone's sold

RIGHT FROM the word go, Rick Kelly just wasn't grooving on the Alpine. And it took me a little while to work it out. See, while I'm old enough to have read about (if not actually witnessed) the daring deeds of the original Alpine A110 from the 1960s, Rick isn't. So while I was soaking up the retro details like the frenched-in driving lights and the body-coloured door capping, Rick was looking at the same car wondering why those dopey lights were fitted and why hadn't Renault finished the cabin properly. Clearly, retro only works if you can relate.

But beyond that, I'll stand by my assessment that the A110 is one of the finest retro cars I've ever driven. It lacks the twee irrelevance of the born-again VW Beetle and it hasn't subverted the original in the way the 1.5-tonne, all-wheel drive Mini Countryman All 4 has. But it does tap into the emotional skillset of the 1960s well from which it's drinking, yet manages to combine that with a driving experience that is not only contemporary, but also riveting.

That driveline borrowed from a Megane RS is the start of things and with 185kW and 320Nm, it's fit but not stupid-powerful. And while the original A110 was rear-engined and this car is mid-engined, the other piece of the Alpine magic – a lack of kilograms – has not been forgotten. At 1103kg, the A110 is a featherweight in 2019.

So, despite having less power than either of the trad hot-hatches here, the Alpine was faster than both of them to 100km/h (by a clean second over the Renault and 1.2 ticks over the i30 N). Across 400m, the dainty little Frawg extends its lead even further, beating the Megane past the post by a good 1.2 seconds (and 13km/h in terminal velocity) and the Hyundai by 1.3sec (and 15km/h). That's handy stuff when you consider the Alpine had to break into the 12s (at nearly 180km/h) for the quarter to dish out such a thumping.

The lap times favour the Alpine over the hatches, too, and while the Megane is a second-and-a-bit behind the A110, the Hyundai needs an extra two-and-a-bit seconds to get around the same Bend layout. Okay, so the Hyundai and Megane both seat five, but you can see where the development money has gone. Which is kind of the point.

Meanwhile, the Alpine proves in the real world that it's still, fundamentally, a road car. And a great one at that. The twin-clutch is slick and refined and the engine never seems to give up or run out of enthusiasm for the job of hurling 1100 kegs down the road. But it's the way it makes all those special noises right over your left shoulder that completes the package and, combined with lovely, light, precise steering, you are reminded that retro isn't necessarily a byword for compromised. – *DM*

JUDGES	DC	LC	RK	DM	SN	TOTAL
PERFORMANCE	18.5	15	18	18	18	87.5
DYNAMICS	16	11.5	14	14	14	69.5
ACCESSIBILITY	6	6.5	8	8	6.5	35
LIVEABILITY	7	4	6	7	5	29
VALUE	7	5.5	6	5	6	29.5
X FACTOR	8.5	7.5	7	9	8.5	40.5
TOTALS	**63**	**50**	**59**	**61**	**58**	**291**

MERCEDES-AMG GT C

Thunderous super coupe fails to blow us away

EVEN THOUGH 'Performance' is the first word in this event's title, how a car makes you feel still counts for a lot. And while the Mercedes-AMG GT C was murderously fast against the clock (see figures to the right), we sometimes bailed from it confused.

Nudge the steering into fast, smooth bends and it hunkers down on its fat Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2s with proper focus. There's a wall of grip to lean into. The wider rear track and electronically controlled LSD also let you stomp on its twin-turbo 4.0-litre V8's throat as soon as you've eyed the corner exit. Of course, its 252kW-per-tonne makes forward thrust cover-your-eyes fast and its thunderous noise will shake koalas out of trees.

Dynamically, though, things take a turn. While you sit on the rear axle sometimes, not even Rick, who has the most attuned butt out of all of us, felt confident in what the back-end was going to do. So what chance did us mere mortals have? Surprise it with a mid-corner bump and its chassis throws itself into a state of confusion to stop your heart for a moment or two.

Still, on the right road, it is enrapturing when you're feeling brave enough to tune into its frequency at nine-tenths. Its brutal mid-range, that can pull in any gear, and huge grip are pleasantly contrasted by its sharp steering feel and delicate front-end. Its seven-speed dual-clutch transaxle shifts robustly and the sport bucket seats secure your kidneys better than an organ thief. But each situation comes with a balance of negatives; its steering had some iffy kickback on our road loop and its optional carbon brakes also felt too dull at first touch, or too sensitive half way through the travel. Meanwhile, the transmission's low-speed manners left us wanting.

The interior's beautiful to behold, but unfortunately, it's a chore. The transmission stalk is placed too far back and its bulky centre console casts buttons (like the exhaust's) out of easy reach. The ride, too, is on the firm side of things.

At $316,500 it's obviously in proper sports car territory, but it's hard to come to terms with that when it's fitted with a sunroof. Conversely, it's too fast and focused in practice to be anything else. The judges discussion tried to make sense of its place in the world. With tremendous pace, grip and presence, it feels right as a track toy. But if that's where the GT C's going with this, we'd suggest just going the full-fat 430kW/700Nm GT R. – *LC*

THE GT C IS ENRAPTURING IF YOU'RE BRAVE ENOUGH TO TUNE INTO ITS FREQUENCY

7th

THE NUMBERS

0-100KM/H
3.66
SEC

0-400KM/H
11.55
SEC @ 204.34KM/H

LAP TIME
1:27.3

JUDGE'S RANK

CAMPBELL
7TH
Epic powertrain but chassis sometimes does stuff you're not expecting.

CORDONY
8TH
Unbelievable noise and pace marred by little flaws.

MORLEY
8TH
I remain unconvinced by the ride, even if it is AMG-typical.

NEWMAN
8TH
Why the recipe matters as much as the ingredients.

KELLY
=5TH
A mean-looking car with a personality all of its own!

2019

Hankook

MOTOR PERFORMANCE CAR OF THE YEAR

JUDGES	DC	LC	RK	DM	SN	TOTAL
PERFORMANCE	17	14	16	17	16	80
DYNAMICS	17	10	12	15	15	69
ACCESSIBILITY	7.5	6.5	8	9	9	40
LIVEABILITY	9	9.5	10	10	9	47.5
VALUE	7	6	7	6	7	33
X FACTOR	8	7	4	5	7	31
TOTALS	65.5	53	57	62	63	300.5

6th

THE NUMBERS

0-100KM/H
3.87
SEC

0-400KM/H
12.02
SEC @ 187.25KM/H

LAP TIME
1:34.0

JUDGE'S RANK

CAMPBELL
5TH
Seriously good. V6 is ace but can I still wish it got a twin-turbo V8?

CORDONY
6TH
So much car. And those looks. But an S4 makes more sense.

MORLEY
7TH
This is the daily you'll take out of the shed. Even on a Sunday.

NEWMAN
6TH
Audi Sport discovers compliance and adjustability. Nice.

KELLY
8TH
A smart, comfortable everyday car that packs a punch.

AUDI RS4 AVANT

Jack of all trades, except ultimate driving thrills

IF PCOTY was held purely on-road, the RS4 Avant might have made the podium. Time and time again during the judges' chat Audi's super wagon was described as "a road car". But it wasn't damning with faint praise, as this was usually prefaced with "brilliant". Audi has changed tack dramatically with the latest RS4, abandoning the high-revving atmo V8 for a twin-turbo V6 and ditching the stiff-riding, handling-first model for compliance and comfort.

In doing so, the RS4 returns to its roots and is all the better for it. The new engine is magnificent, with huge power (0-100km/h in 3.87sec!), great response and a stirring howl under heavy load. Switching to an eight-speed auto ensures no dual-clutch stumbles, while there is now genuine ride comfort. For long road sections the RS4 was the pick of the PCOTY litter and even switching the dampers to Dynamic didn't destroy its composure.

This softer setup results in plenty of body roll when cornering hard and the RS4 can feel heavier than its 1715kg suggests, but the extra movement makes it easy to judge the limits. What truly brings this Audi alive, though, is the diff setup. Trail brake into a corner, use the weight shift to help pin the front to the ground then simply step hard on the throttle; power is shuffled exactly where it needs go with ruthless efficiency.

There is none of the dreaded on-throttle understeer that afflicted Haldex-equipped Audis of old and combined with the enormous grunt under the bonnet, the RS4 is capable of covering ground – in all weathers – at a pace that would make a few supercars sweat. It now works with the road surface rather than fighting against it.

Unfortunately, a lot of what makes the RS4 Avant so brilliant on the road handicaps it on the track. It might seem churlish to mark a car down for its circuit ability when it's clearly not designed for it, but we're looking for the ultimate performance car and every car ahead on the list works to a very high standard in both environments.

There is enjoyment to be found, as long as you don't push too hard. The RS4 is obviously very quick in a straight line, but it's also surprisingly adjustable and, again, those diffs work their magic in keeping more than 1.7 tonnes pointing in the right direction. However, beyond eight-tenths the engine feels 500rpm short of true excellence and there just isn't enough tyre, body control or brakes to make the RS4 fun. Nonetheless, as a fast family hauler it's fantastic. – *SN*

JUDGES	DC	LC	RK	DM	SN	TOTAL
PERFORMANCE	14	10	16	16	15	71
DYNAMICS	17.5	12.5	16	15	18	79
ACCESSIBILITY	8	8.5	9	8	9.5	43
LIVEABILITY	8	7	9	9	8	41
VALUE	8.5	7	10	9	8	42.5
X FACTOR	8.5	7.5	2	7	6	31
TOTALS	**64.5**	**52.5**	**62**	**64**	**64.5**	**307.5**

HYUNDAI i30 N

Grunt-packed hatch fails to overpower the podium

SO, WE all know that this is PCOTY where value for money and everyday practicality count for less than they do at Bang For Your Bucks or even a *MOTOR* comparison. Which means the i30 N can't hope to trade on its hatchback smarts and its everyman price tag. Well, not entirely anyway. But we say those factors still come into this which is how the humble hot hatch managed to jag a spot in PCOTY in the first place. And this was no wildcard entry; nope, the Hyundai got here by also being a damn fine performance car.

If you can remember a time when a local 5.0-litre V8 muscle car made 200kW (on a good day) then the Hyundai's 202kW from 2.0 litres will leave you making underwater fish faces. Modern turbocharging and electronic management of everything from the injection to the valve timing has also meant that a 2.0-litre making 202kW is no longer a cammy, cranky hand-held flare that needs to be revved stupid. In fact, if anything, the Hyundai's engine is almost tuned a bit too far to the conservative side of things. As in, it's all done and dusted by about 5800rpm and it genuinely lacks the top-end surge of, say, the Renault Megane RS.

But that's on the track; on the road where it's all about mid-range and flexibility, the Hyundai is a revelation. Punch the throttle to the floor – doesn't matter what gear you're in – and the N simply bolts. Not only does it have more peak poke than those old-school muscle cars, it also has more of everything else, everywhere else.

The lack of a two-pedal option will hurt the i30 N's sales (there's a double-clutch job heading for the market in the latter part of this year), but it surely doesn't hurt the car itself. Nope, the six-speed manual has great ratios, a slick shift and an easy-to-manage clutch action that reminds us all why manual boxes were once the performance go-to.

In any case, the combo is good enough to hustle the slightly porky little i30 (1429kg) to 100km/h in 6.25 seconds and across 400m in 14.3sec at 164.3km/h. It pulls up hard, too, needing just 33.8m from 100km/h despite the fact that it isn't sporting the Brembos suggested by the red paint. The lap time of 1:37.3 is shaped by a degree of chattery understeer that sets in as you get braver. But the price people, the price.

Again, this is PCOTY, not Aldi, so the dollars are less important. Which is why the Hyundai finished fifth and not higher. Things is, though, even if this was a $60K car, it'd still make you think about your definition of performance. – *DM*

> DOESN'T MATTER WHAT GEAR YOU'RE IN – THE HYUNDAI i30 N SIMPLY BOLTS

5th

THE NUMBERS

0-100KM/H
6.25
SEC

0-400KM/H
14.29
SEC @ 164.26KM/H

LAP TIME
1:37.3

JUDGE'S RANK

CAMPBELL
6TH
Great fun. If a Golf GTI and Focus RS had a baby...

CORDONY
7TH
Nails its brief brilliantly. Could lap it all day.

MORLEY
=3RD
Puts the rest of Planet Hot Hatch firmly on notice.

NEWMAN
5TH
The Goldilocks hot hatch. Just right. Places here on merit.

KELLY
3RD
A really enjoyable little performance car. I'm impressed.

2019

4th

Hankook
MOTOR
PERFORMANCE
CAR OF THE YEAR

JUDGES	DC	LC	RK	DM	SN	TOTAL
PERFORMANCE	17.5	13.5	15	18	18	82
DYNAMICS	17.5	14	16	17	17	81.5
ACCESSIBILITY	8	6.5	8	7	7	36.5
LIVEABILITY	7	8.5	6	7	7	35.5
VALUE	7.5	8	6	5	8	34.5
X FACTOR	9.5	7.5	8	9	9.5	43.5
TOTALS	67	58	59	63	66.5	313.5

AUDI R8 RWS

Rear-drive atmo V10 knew how to steal hearts

SUPERCAR GOOD looks, howling atmo V10 and rear-wheel drive – throw in a gate-shift manual and the Audi R8 Rear Wheel Series could almost represent the dream sports car.

Even with its seven-speed twin-clutch auto, the R8 RWS is an extremely desirable driver's car, which was confirmed by finishing fourth, just off the podium. Nothing to shirk at – the RWS is an outstanding thing.

Perhaps the question to first ask is, what is there not to like about the RWS? Acceleration – ballistic, almost surprisingly so, and not just because its 3.57sec 0-100km/h time bested Audi's claim by 0.2sec! No, if you drove all the cars here, you'd be unlikely to put the RWS second on the drag strip order ahead of the GT C or M5. That probably has something to do with the R8's big 5.2-litre V10 meting out its tremendous oomph in a polite curve all the way to its 8700rpm redline, rather than rudely lumping it all at the bottom of the tacho with a pair of dirty big turbochargers. Interestingly, at PCOTY 2013, the winning R8 V10 Plus – 404kW and all-wheel drive – did, no kidding, 3.57sec to 100km/h (and a slower quarter mile). Perhaps we should do all our straight-line testing at The Bend from now on...

If handling is more your thing than acceleration times, then charming, old-school mid-engine dynamics await you in the big, bad RWS. With 245/295 front/rear tyres, the R8 likes you to keep brake pressure right to the apex – but not too much, 'cos that big lump of V10 will have you facing backwards quicker than you knew what just happened. Patience, too, is rewarded getting back on the power, where over-eagerness is met with fairly serious power understeer. To get the absolute best out of the slightly precious RWS takes real precision and patience – it's not a cinch.

Of course, if you signed up to RWS for skids, it will oblige, if also not in quite the benign way you might think – this is no forgiving drift machine. But get it right, and you'll feel like a superhero.

Then there's the windows-down sound; epic brakes; flat, low-centre-of-gravity handling; even the price is relatively cheap... so why fourth and not higher? Adaptive dampers and perhaps more grip would be nice, but really, this is where the points game is most apparent, the final three are little bit better across the board. In another time and place, the RWS is absolutely PCOTY-winning material. – *DC*

THE NUMBERS

0-100KM/H
3.57
SEC

0-400KM/H
11.36
SEC @ 206.87KM/H

LAP TIME
1:28.5

JUDGE'S RANK

CAMPBELL
4TH
Offers a classic mid-engine supercar experience in 2019.

CORDONY
3RD
Does theatre. Does milk runs. Does fast. And cheap, too.

MORLEY
=5TH
I can't believe that losing front drive hasn't ruined it.

NEWMAN
3RD
A thrill and a challenge, everything a supercar should be. Love it.

KELLY
=5TH
Cool looks, great sound. More enjoyable on track than on road.

N BT 37X
Castrol

IN ANOTHER TIME AND PLACE, THE RWS IS ABSOLUTELY PCOTY-WINNING MATERIAL

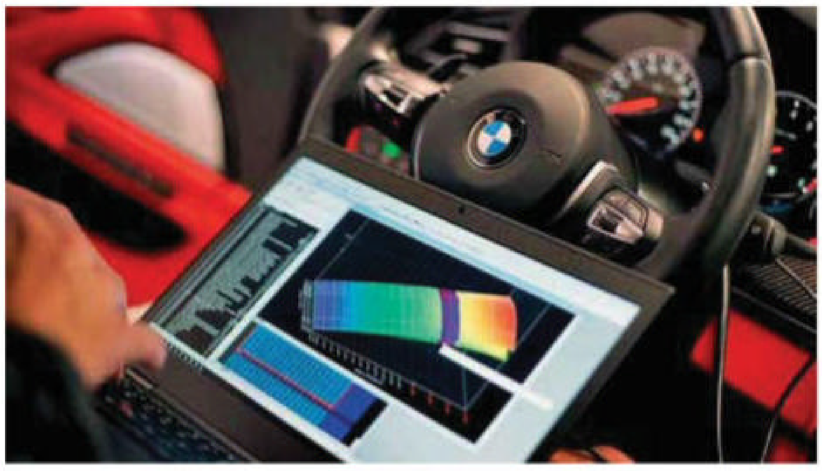
HEX TUNING By VF ENGINEERING

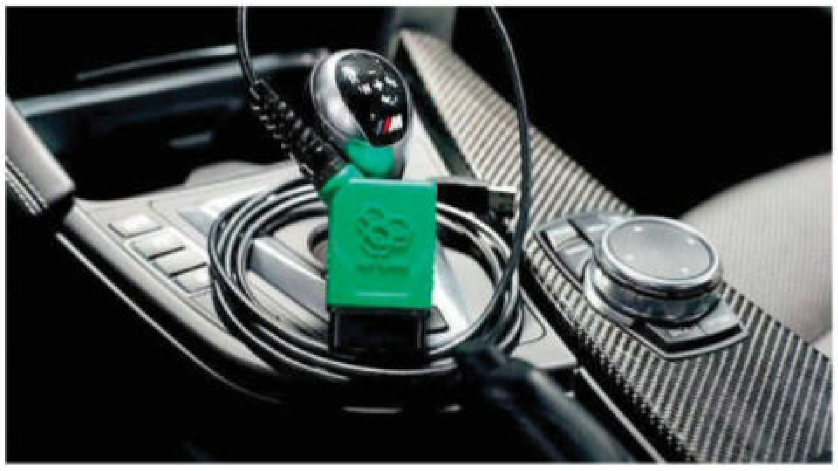
ECU TUNING SOLUTIONS

Australia Wide

BMW, Mercedes & other Prestige Vehicles

DEALER ENQUIRIES WELCOME





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bwa PERFORMANCE

2019

Hankook
MOTOR
PERFORMANCE
CAR OF THE YEAR

JUDGES	DC	LC	RK	DM	SN	TOTAL
PERFORMANCE	19	16.5	18	18	19	90.5
DYNAMICS	18	11.5	16	16	16	77.5
ACCESSIBILITY	8	7.5	8	8	8.5	40
LIVEABILITY	8.5	7	9	7	8	39.5
VALUE	7.5	6.5	7	8	8.5	37.5
X FACTOR	8	5	6	6	6	31
TOTALS	**69**	**54**	**64**	**63**	**66**	**316**

3rd

BMW M5 COMPETITION

An icon returns to form but stumbles on the details

IT'S A FAIR WHILE since the BMW M5 has been declared a sensuous, inviting thing. Three generations probably (starting with the V10 E60 model back in '05). Even in this car, the latest, Competition version of the M5, there's still a slight tactility barrier between your brain and the car. The steering is a bit lifeless and the whole car is faster than you'll ever be, so you might as well shut up and just take the ride on its many other merits. And merits there most certainly are. Enough for third place, anyway.

Actually, calling the M5 Competition out for being a bit aloof is probably a mistake to begin with. Remember being told how a modern supersonic fighter-jet just wouldn't stay in the air without computers? Well, it's the same thing going on here, I reckon. While your attack-jet has to be inherently unstable to be able to turn fast enough, and absorbs distance faster than the human brain can figure, it'll also fall out of the sky without a super computer making the crucial split-second decisions.

Ditto the M5, to some degree. See, there are times, particularly on the track where you honestly felt like you were just (and only just) hanging on to the tiger's tail. When those 460kW and 750Nm light off, you are inevitably going to start arriving at corners in a way you've never discussed with your Nana. At which point, you better hope like hell that the car is going to step in and not get as flustered as you are right at this instant.

Seriously, on full boost and big revs, unless you're Rick Kelly, you're probably just along for the ride. It's very focusing, but it's also intimidating. Kind of like trying to land a four-metre shark in a three-metre tinny. You better be careful where you put your feet.

The M5's lap time of 1.30:8 puts it fourth outright in the inaugural *MOTOR*/The Bend GP, an amazing feat when you consider that it's the only car here (apart from the hot hatches and the RS4) with four doors and five seats. It's also a hefty bugger at almost 1.9 tonnes, and, again, it's here that you can see that the Competition is all about a result, not necessarily giving you puny humans a chubby, per se.

THE NUMBERS

0-100KM/H
3.78
SEC

0-400KM/H
11.53
SEC @ 203.09KM/H

LAP TIME
1:30.8

JUDGE'S RANK

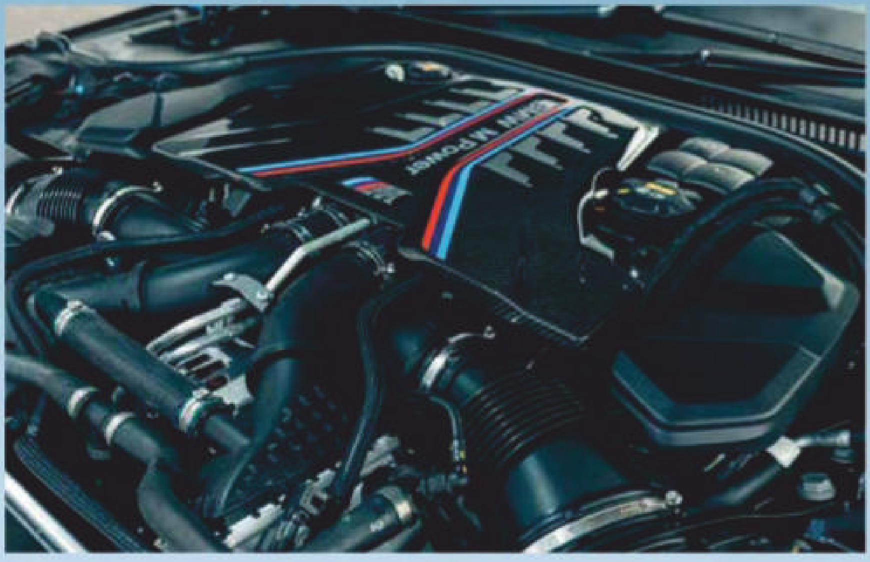
CAMPBELL
3RD
If it had the front end and noise of an E63, it would be near perfect.

CORDONY
5TH
Superman in a business suit, but three cylinders sound missing.

MORLEY
=5TH
A dead-set ballistic missile. With controls of clay.

NEWMAN
4TH
Lunatic performance but ride, steering and noise should be better.

KELLY
2ND
A big angry monster that really deals with its size well.



LEFT
Uprated 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 has all the power in the world; it's utterly relentless, but we wish it sounded a bit less artificial

With the dampers set to Comfort, you might notice a tiny bit of body roll and maybe even a whiff of understeer on the track. But switch the drive modes up to a racier setting and the thing is suddenly producing mild oversteer on the limit. Turn off the DSC (as you can in a modern M-car) and turn off the front axle, and the M5 is a drift-car par excellence.

In a straight line, the thing is utterly formidable. Again, it's a no-nonsense approach to things with the Competition combining tyre and mechanical grip (it's all-paw, remember) with a warhead of an engine to get it to its destination 400m away. From rest, it needs just 3.78 seconds to get to 100 and from there it requires a mere 7.45sec more to reach the quarter-mile (in 11.53sec). At which point it can be relied upon to be screaming along at better than the double-ton. In the process, it requires just 1.8 seconds to get from 80 to 120km/h. Only the 911 GT2 RS needs less time for this crucial-to-overtaking stunt. And not much less.

And you don't need to be redlining the thing in every gear to achieve that sort of thrust, either. The torque curve is flat enough that every single one of those Newton metres is available from as low as 1800rpm all the way through to just 200rpm shy (5800) of where power maxxes out. That's modern engine management for you. Impressive barely covers it.

The other theme that has surrounded the latest M5 is its value-for-money quotient. Okay, so the Competition package adds around $30K to that, but you can see and feel where that money has gone. BMW has previously admitted that the Competition is all about going fast at the possible expense of some luxury. But unlike the track-oriented M4 CS where BMW ditched everything from the cup holders to the actual door trims, in the M5 Competition, it's hard to see where the luxo thing falls anything like short. On the flip side, the stiffer suspension can be felt and it's this that gives the car its edge on the track. Well, combined with the lower ride height and the tweaks to the wheel-alignment settings, but the fact that adaptive dampers have been retained enable to car to remain civilised but fearsome over a wide range of conditions.

It may not be the most talkative car BMW has ever built, but in terms of the brand's four-door sedans, it's far and away the fastest we've ever seen. – *DM*

> IT'S NOT THAT TALKATIVE, BUT IT'S FAR AND AWAY THE FASTEST FOUR-DOOR BMW WE'VE EVER SEEN

2019

Hankook

MOTOR
PERFORMANCE
CAR OF THE YEAR

JUDGES	DC	LC	RK	DM	SN	TOTAL
PERFORMANCE	17	16	16	17	18	84
DYNAMICS	18.5	14	14	17	19	82.5
ACCESSIBILITY	9	7.5	8	9	8	41.5
LIVEABILITY	7.5	7	8	7	7.5	37
VALUE	9	7.5	8	8	9.5	42
X FACTOR	9	7	5	9	7.5	37.5
TOTALS	**70**	**59**	**59**	**67**	**69.5**	**324.5**

2nd

THE NUMBERS

0-100KM/H
4.50
SEC

0-400KM/H
12.52
SEC @ 182.57KM/H

LAP TIME
1:31.0

JUDGE'S RANK

CAMPBELL
1ST
Love at first slide... my Performance Car of the Year.

CORDONY
2ND
Like a well-trained pitbull, it's both your best friend and a viscious giant killer

MORLEY
1ST
My favourite BMW just got even favouritier. Come to Daddy.

NEWMAN
1ST
A new entrant to BMW's pantheon of greats. Would happily drive this forever.

KELLY
=5TH
A nice road car that turns into a monster when it needs to.

BMW M2 COMPETITION

BMW's small M delivers a big verdict

TWO TENTHS of a second. That's all that split the BMW M2 Competition and M5 Competition around one lap of the West Circuit. When Rick Kelly revealed this, jaws should have hit the concrete. But the M2 Competition had enchanted so many at this point, we more wondered if it could squash BMW's 17-year-long drought at Performance Car of the Year. It was clear this is one of Munich's most potent weapons in a while.

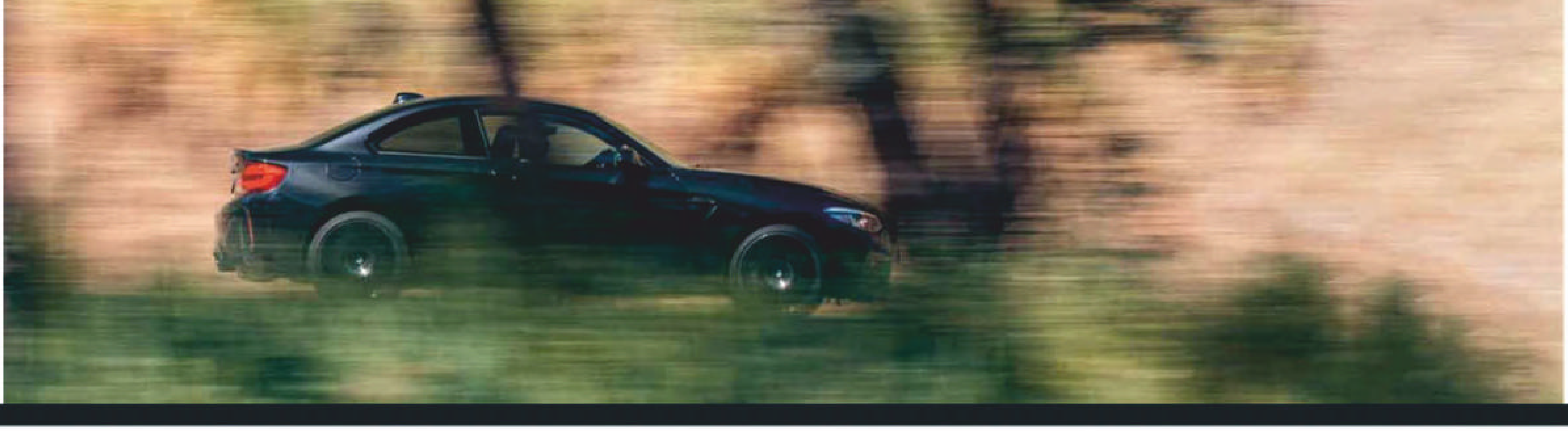
The M2 has barely passed puberty in its life cycle, but the Competition badge changes much more than its name. BMW now bolts the M3 and M4's twin-turbo inline six into the M2's little snout to raise power from 272kW to 302kW. Meanwhile, torque swells to an M3/M4-matching 550Nm.

Despite gaining 55kg, an injection of an extra 30kW/85Nm means it still punches as hard as a rapper's security guard and a 2.5 second burst from 80-120km/h reveals it's three tenths faster than the old car on a roll. Drop the hammer and thrust builds instantly before its mid-range hurls you into a meaningful top-end rush. It sounds all right, too, as even though the new engine replaces the N55's soulful timbre with a coarser note, its growl is more natural approaching its 7600rpm redline.

We'll admit we were nervous to uncork this power where South Australia's Gorge Road straddles Cudlee Creek, especially in something as wide and short as a go-kart. Those corners dotted with cracks, lumps and elevation changes aren't forgiving. Yet, few could have kept up with the M2. New engine mapping calms the S55's outputs so they build more progressively and make its throttle more usable than the original M3 or M4 could ever dream.

Turn in and it holds on as if its Michelins double in width. The suspension soaks any big lumps and, crucially, it's an M-car that wants to talk to you. You can feel the grip of each tyre patch through those nice, big-winged M4 Competition seats. The steering, too, relies on new software and a reinforced front-end to cut corners with the kind of precision a surgeon would envy.

Make room on your bucket list to drive this thing on track because its dynamics are bewitching on, and beyond, its limit. It'll happily shift its angle of attack into a corner



AN INJECTION OF 30KW AND 85NM MEANS IT STILL PUNCHES AS HARD AS A RAPPER'S BODYGUARD

on the brakes or pivot around at the apex with more lock. Meanwhile, stability software lifted from the M4 CS softly guides, rather than snaps, you back in line if you overcook it. Switch off the stability and not only does it now have the power to now match, and overcome, its prodigious grip, it gives you the confidence to hang the tail out at a desired angle.

Throughout the event you'd exit the M2 Competition wanting more for all the right reasons. Only a crowbar would pry Messrs Newman and Campbell from the driver's seat after their drift shots. Even Rick found it difficult to move onto the next car. Hunting down its big bro so convincingly on a track with a straight as long as an airstrip shows how deep its talents reach, and only Max Verstappen on a qualifier would care about the whiff of understeer or high-speed instability.

Few cars have felt as involving, exciting and confidence inspiring. That rings true even outside the walls of PCOTY where its price, practicality and pedigree attract a span of rivals. It might not accelerate like an Audi RS3, or poise itself like a Porsche 718 Cayman, but it comes close, and offers more options than either.

It's hard to grasp this breadth of ability when you first hop in. You still sit high and it's clear much of the Competition's budget was spent on things deep underneath the leather. Its ride, too, is firm. Do we wish it had adaptive damping? Not if it compromised its simplicity, because that's what allows it to focus on mastering one thing – driving.

As for improvements, we do wish 400mm and 380mm brake discs combined with 20 pistons worth of caliper bit harder. But the real value in the optional brakes, that inflate its $104,990 price by $3000, is they'll outlast Iron Man's armour suit. And even though its seven-speed dual clutch proved faultless, there's a good chance the no-cost six-speed manual would sweeten its package even further.

Slaying what finished in first place was always going to be a colossal challenge, yet at the top of three judges' score sheets and a tight second on another, it came very close to joining the E36 and E46 M3 in BMW's PCOTY trophy cabinet. However, swiping a silver medal in a field of this calibre is a solid achievement and helps the little fella make a point loud and clear. BMW M is back. – *LC*

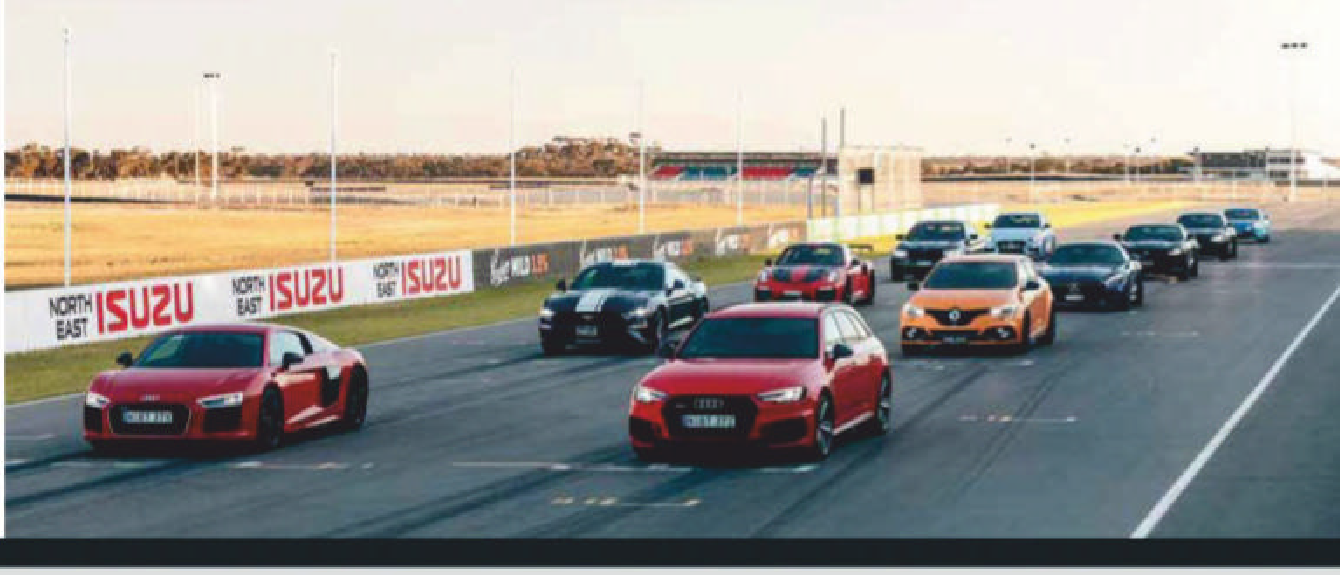
↑

ABOVE
The M2 Competition is a rare example of something delivering more than the sum of its parts

2019

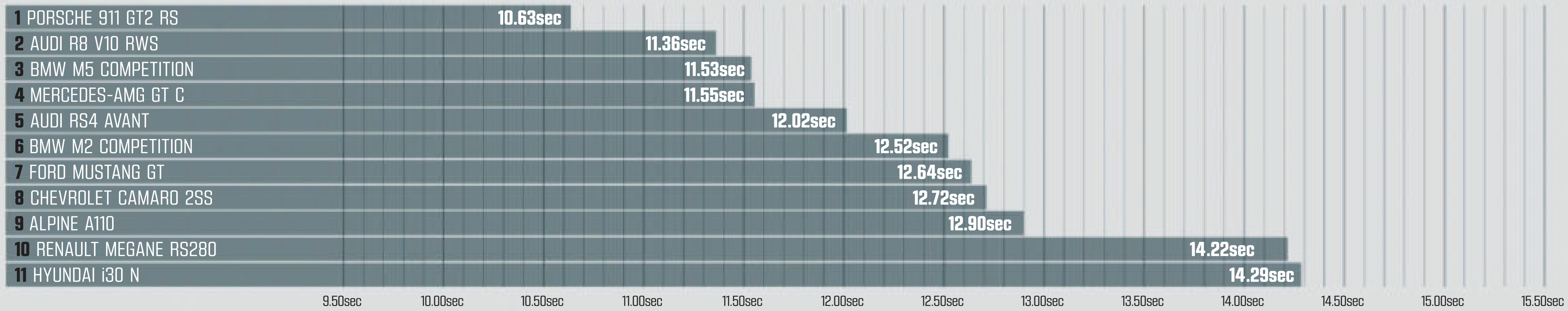
Hankook

MOTOR PERFORMANCE CAR OF THE YEAR



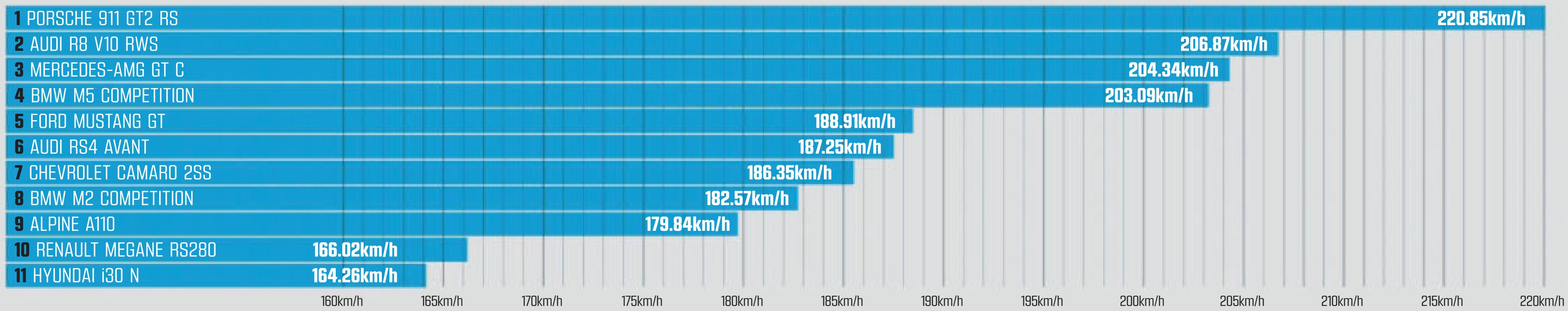
0-400M

Drivers: Scott Newman, David Morley



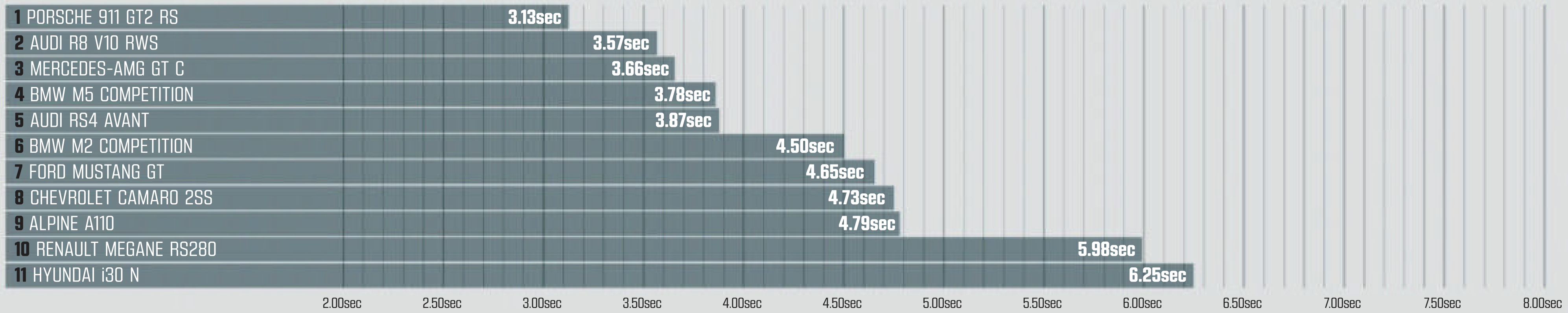
0-400M V-MAX

Drivers: Scott Newman, David Morley



0-100KM/H

Drivers: Scott Newman, David Morley



	 ALPINE A110 PREMIERE	 **AUDI R8 V10 RWS**	 **AUDI RS4 AVANT**	 **BMW M2 COMPETITION**	 **BMW M5 COMPETITION**
BODY	2 door, 2 seat coupe	2 door, 2 seat coupe	5 door, 5 seat wagon	2 door, 4 seat coupe	4 door, 5 seat sedan
DRIVE	rear wheel	rear wheel	all wheel	rear wheel	all wheel
ENGINE	1798cc inline 4, DOHC, 16v, turbo	5204cc V10, DOHC, 40v	2894cc V6, DOHC, 24v, twin turbo	2979cc inline 6, DOHC, 24v, twin turbo	4395cc V8, DOHC, 32v, twin turbo
BORE/STROKE	79.7 x 90.1mm	84.5 x 92.8mm	84.5 x 86.0mm	84.0 x 89.6mm	89.0 x 88.3mm
COMPRESSION	9.0:1	12.5:1	10.0:1	10.2:1	10.0:1
POWER	185kW @ 6000rpm	397kW @ 7800rpm	331kW @ 5700 6700rpm	302kW @ 5250 7000rpm	460kW @ 6000rpm
TORQUE	320Nm @ 2000rpm	540Nm @ 6500rpm	600Nm @ 1900 5000rpm	550Nm @ 2350 5200rpm	750Nm @ 1800 5800rpm
POWER/WEIGHT	168kW/tonne	250kW/tonne	193kW/tonne	195kW/tonne	247kW/tonne
TRANSMISSION	7 speed dual clutch	7 speed dual clutch	8 speed automatic	7 speed dual clutch	8 speed automatic
WEIGHT	1103kg	1590kg	1715kg	1550kg	1865kg
SUSPENSION	multi links, coil springs, anti roll bar (f/r)	double wishbones, coil springs, anti roll bar, dampers (f/r)	multi links, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti roll bar (f/r)	struts, coil springs, anti roll bar (f); multi links, coil springs, anti roll bar	multi links, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti roll bar (f/r)
BRAKES	320mm ventilated discs, 4 piston calipers (f); 320mm ventilated discs, single piston floating calipers	365mm ventilated/drilled discs, 8 piston calipers (f); 356mm ventilated/drilled discs, 4 piston calipers	375mm ventilated discs, 6 piston calipers (f); 330mm ventilated discs, single piston calipers	400mm ventilated discs, 6 piston calipers (f); 380mm ventilated discs, 4 piston calipers (r)	400mm ventilated discs, 6 piston calipers (f); 380mm ventilated discs, single piston calipers
WHEELS	18.0 x 7.0 inch (f); 18.0 x 8.0 inch (r)	19.0 x 8.5 inch (f); 19.0 x 11.0 inch (r)	20.0 x 9.0 inch (f/r)	19.0 x 9.0 inch (f); 19.0 x 10.0 inch (r)	20.0 x 9.5 inch (f); 20.0 x 10.5 inch (r)
TYRES	205/40 R18 (f); 235/40 R18 (r) Michelin Pilot Sport 4	245/35 R19 (f); 295/35 R19 (r) Pirelli P Zero	275/30 R20 97Y (f/r); Pirelli P Zero	245/35 ZR19 93Y (f/r); 265/35 ZR19 98Y (r) Michelin Pilot Super Sport	275/35 ZR20 (f); 285/35 ZR20 (r) Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S
PRICE	$106,500	$321,100 (as tested)	$165,546 (as tested)	$107,900 (as tested)	$229,900

The Data

Are you more of a numbers person? Welcome, then…

THE BEND's kilometre-long front straight is the ideal spot for performance testing, especially with the grippy new surface. And with contenders like the AMG GT C, Audi R8 RWS and the epic GT2 RS, we anticipated fast times on the fresh tarmac. Although no 0-100km/h times start with a two (the Porsche managing 3.13sec, not its claimed 2.8sec), there's certainly a few top speeds on the fast side of 200km/h!

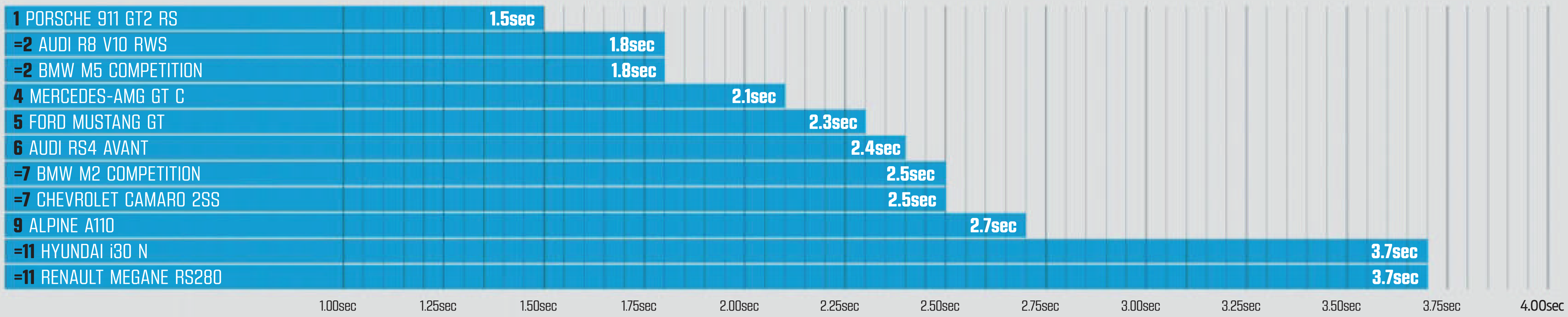
OFFICIAL TIMING SUPPLIER

VBOX Australia

www.vboxaustralia.com.au

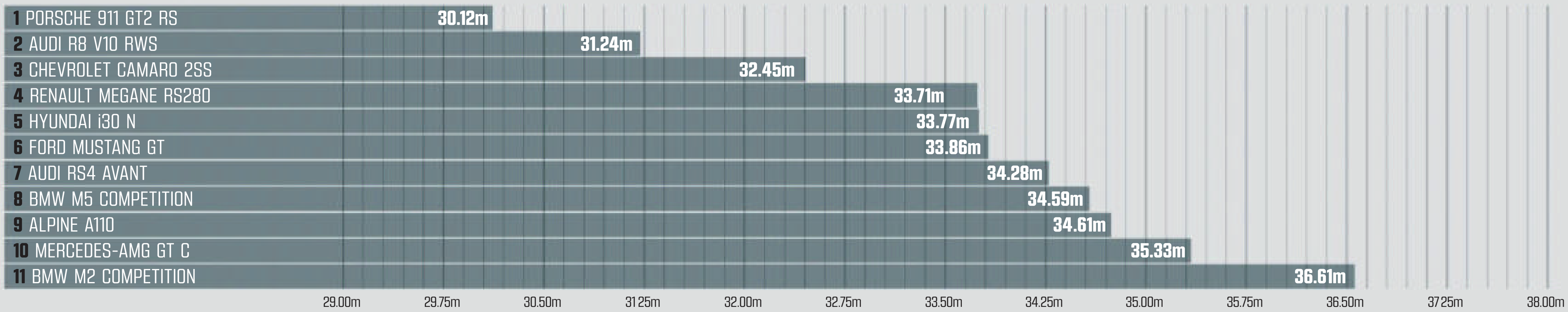
80-120KM/H

Drivers: Scott Newman, David Morley



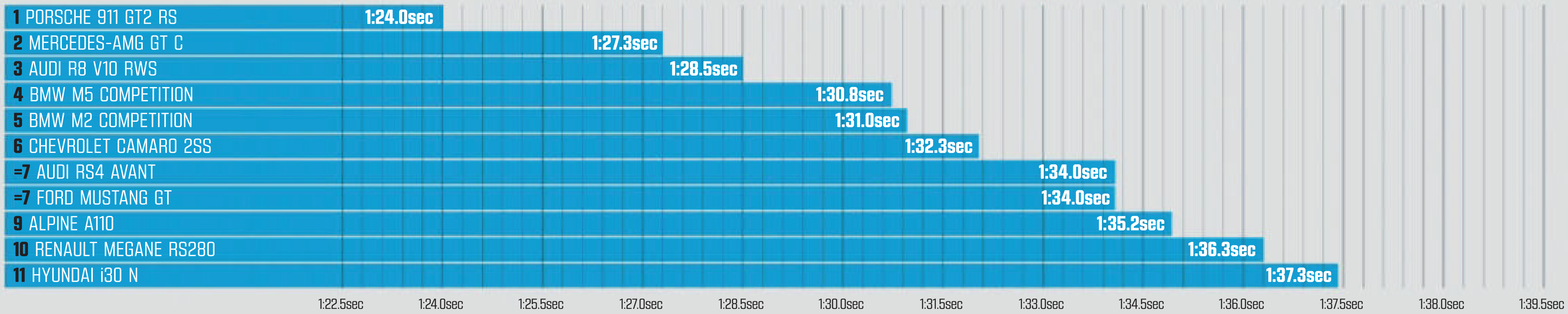
100-0KM/H

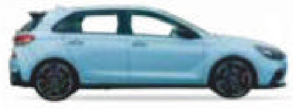
Drivers: Scott Newman, David Morley



LAP TIME

Driver: Rick Kelly





FORD MUSTANG GT	CHEVROLET CAMARO 2SS	HYUNDAI i30 N	MERCEDES-BENZ AMG GT C	PORSCHE 911 GT2 RS	RENAULT MEGANE RS280
2-door, 4-seat coupe	2-door, 4-seat coupe	5-door, 5-seat hatch	2-door, 2-seat coupe	2-door, 2 seat coupe	5 door, 5 seat hatch
rear-wheel	rear-wheel	front-wheel	rear-wheel	rear wheel	front wheel
5038cc V8, DOHC, 32v	6162cc V8, OHV, 16v	1998cc inline-4, DOHC, 16v, turbo	3982cc V8, DOHC, 32v, twin-turbo	3800cc flat 6, DOHC, 24v, twin turbo	1798cc inline 4, DOHC, 16v, turbo
93.0 x 92.7mm	103.25 x 92mm	86.0 x 86.0mm	93.0 x 92.0mm	102.0 x 77.5mm	79.7 x 90.1mm
12.0:1	11.5:1	9.5:1	10.5:1	9.0:1	9.9:1
339kW @ 7000rpm	339kW @ 5700rpm	202kW @ 6000rpm	410kW @ 5750-6750rpm	515kW @ 7000rpm	205kW @ 6000rpm
556Nm @ 4600rpm	617Nm @ 4600rpm	353Nm @ 1450-4700rpm	680Nm @ 1900-5500rpm	750Nm @ 2500 4500rpm	390Nm @ 2400 4800rpm
193kW/tonne	198kW/tonne	141kW/tonne	252kW/tonne	350kW/tonne	145kW/tonne
10-speed automatic	8-speed automatic	6-speed manual	7-speed dual-clutch	7-speed dual clutch	6 speed manual
1756kg	1710kg	1429kg	1625kg	1470kg	1407kg
struts, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar (f); multi-links, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar (r)	struts, dampers, anti-roll bar (f); multi-links, dampers, anti-roll bar (r)	struts, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar (f); multi-links, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar (r)	struts, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar (f); multi-links, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar (r)	struts, adaptive dampers, anti roll bar (f); multi links, adaptive dampers, anti roll bar (r)	struts, coil springs, anti roll bar (f); torsion beam, coil springs, anti roll bar (r)
380mm ventilated discs, 6-piston calipers (f); 330mm ventilated discs, single-piston calipers (r)	345mm ventilated discs, 4-piston calipers (f); 339mm ventilated discs, 4-piston calipers (r)	345mm ventilated discs, single-piston calipers (f); 314mm ventilated discs, single-piston calipers (r)	390mm carbon-ceramic discs, 6-piston calipers (f); 360mm carbon-ceramic discs, 4-piston calipers (r)	410mm carbon ceramic discs, 6 piston calipers (f); 390mm carbon ceramic discs, 4 piston calipers (r)	355mm ventilated discs, 4 piston calipers (f); 290mm solid discs, single piston calipers (r)
19.0 x 9.0-inch (f); 19.0 x 9.5-inch (r)	20 x 8.5-inch (f); 20 x 9.5-inch (r)	19.0 x 8.0-inch (f/r)	19.0 x 9.0-inch (f); 20.0 x 12.0-inch (r)	20.0 x 9.5 inch (f); 21.0 x 12.5 inch (r)	19.0 x 9.0 inch (f/r)
255/40 ZR19 (f); 275/40 ZR19 (r) Michelin Pilot Sport 4S	245/40 ZR20 95Y (f); 275/35 ZR20 98Y (r) Goodyear Eagle F1	235/35 R19 (f/r); Pirelli P Zero	265/35 R19 (f); 305/30 ZR20 (r) Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2	265/35 ZR20 (f); 325/30 ZR21 (r) Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2	245/35 R19 (f/r); Bridgestone S001
$75,640 (as tested)	$85,990	$43,485 (as tested)	$345,829 (as tested)	$729,930 (as tested)	$47,860 (as tested)

2019

Hankook

MOTOR
PERFORMANCE
CAR OF THE YEAR

Winner

BY SCOTT NEWMAN + PICS ELLEN DEWAR/ALASTAIR BROOK

PORSCHE 911 GT2 RS

THE GT2 RS HAD THE WEIGHT OF EXPECTATION AND A MEGA PRICE TAG TO OVERCOME. BUT THE ULTIMATE 911 BEWITCHED ALL TO CLAIM PCOTY 2019

MOTOR PERFORMANCE CAR OF THE YEAR

JUDGES	DC	LC	RK	DM	SN	TOTAL
PERFORMANCE	20	18	20	20	19	97
DYNAMICS	20	16.5	18	19	19	92.5
ACCESSIBILITY	8.5	7.5	9	9	8	42
LIVEABILITY	6.5	7	5	5	7.5	31
VALUE	4.5	5	5	2	5	21.5
X FACTOR	10	7.5	10	10	9.5	47
TOTALS	**69.5**	**61.5**	**67**	**65**	**68**	**331**

1st

THE NUMBERS

0-100KM/H
3.13
SEC

0-400KM/H
10.63
SEC @ 220.85KM/H

LAP TIME
1:24.0

JUDGE'S RANK

CAMPBELL
2ND
It's so good I could weep. But man, $750K...

CORDONY
1ST
It's better and faster than you and always will be.

MORLEY
2ND
Where on earth is this all going to end?

NEWMAN
2ND
Nuclear performance, yet so accessible. Amazing, but $200K more than a Turbo S?

KELLY
1ST
I love this car. It's expensive, but I'll never forget driving it.

DVA·11R
GT2RS

THE PORSCHE 911 GT2 RS is *MOTOR*'s 2019 Performance Car of the Year. It's so fast, so potent and so powerful that it not only beat 10 of the finest performance cars on-sale today, it beat democracy itself. As you might have deduced, three of the five judges put the BMW M2 Competition atop their lists, but the Porsche scored highest overall. Cue much head scratching. In the end, the Porsche got the nod as the overall winner because it was no lower than second on any judge's ballot, whereas the M2 scored three firsts, a second and a fifth. That means across five judges the GT2 RS had an average score of 1.6, whereas the M2's average was 2. Porsche wins.

Though I did not personally vote for the Porsche, it takes only a glance at the numbers to know that it's a worthy winner. Simply put, PCOTY has never seen anything like the GT2 RS. Neither have the judges. Rick Kelly put it best: "It's the only time I have felt acceleration that's better than my Supercar." Then again, that shouldn't be a surprise, as this ultimate 911 has an almost identical power-to-weight ratio to Rick's Nissan Altima with even more torque.

In terms of outright performance, the GT2 RS blew the other contenders to smithereens. It was 0.44sec quicker to 100km/h than the second-placed R8 RWS, yet was merely warming up. Once rolling, the Porsche was gone. Its 10.63sec quarter mile is the lowest number we've ever recorded, while its 220.85km/h trap speed is the highest. Its 1.5sec 80-120km/h effort is

WEISSACH RS

essentially time travel, while no production car we've experienced stops better, the GT2 RS pulling up from 100km/h in 30.12m. The scary part? It could've gone even quicker. With more grip the 2.8sec 0-100km/h claim is surely achievable while a number of runs resulted in 225-226km/h trap speeds.

But the GT2 RS isn't a Dodge Demon, it's more concerned with corners than the straight bits in between. In a mere 3.41km the Porsche pulled 3.3sec on the second-best AMG GT C, itself an outstanding circuit performer. A Hyundai i30 N is no slouch – by most standards it's a reasonably quick car – yet the GT2 RS was *13.3 seconds quicker* around The Bend's West Circuit.

Yet PCOTY never has and never will be about pure numbers. If it was we could simply select the winner from a spec sheet and save a lot of time and money. A PCOTY winner has to set the performance benchmarks in its segment, yet also be useable and enjoyable as a road car. The most remarkable aspect of the 911 GT2 RS is its friendliness. It has that uncanny Porsche knack of enough initial compliance to absorb the majority of bumps while retaining ruthless body control on gnarlier roads.

On very bumpy tarmac it struggles, hopping and skipping and triggering the unusually conservative traction control. Porsche's motorsport models haven't adopted the standard cars' 'Sport ESP' setting and while it's not a huge issue in the GT3, the enormous torque of the GT2 RS results in almost constant electronic intervention with the aids engaged, yet deactivating them on the public road is potentially brave or foolhardy in a car this fast and expensive. Owners might aspire to being Walter Rohrl, but are unlikely to possess the same level of driving talent.

You don't need to be driving a GT2 RS quickly for it to be an event. The theatre starts from the moment you turn the key, the 515kW/750Nm 3.8-litre twin-turbo flat-six erupting with a bassy explosion unlike any boosted Porsche engine that hasn't been strapped into the back of a Le Mans car.

The dual-clutch 'box and light steering make it undemanding to drive, but it's also the noisiest car any of the PCOTY judges have ever experienced.

Road noise is an issue in most 911s, but the enormous Michelin Cup tyres on the GT2 RS thrum so loudly at speed that conversation is a challenge. There's so little sound deadening that you can clearly hear the turbos exhaling, the brake pads gripping the discs and the gearbox swapping cogs. This sonic symphony, as well as the way the steering gently dances in your hands over bumps, means you don't have to be

↑

TOP
Like the brooding clouds above Murray Bridge, the GT2 makes its presence felt on road as much as track

ABOVE
You could (and we did) spend hours examining the finer details, the touches that make the GT2 RS so mesmerising

THE LIST YOU WANT YOUR CAR ON

1996	Porsche 993 Turbo
1997	BMW E36 M3
1998	Porsche Boxter
1999	Porsche 996 Carrera
2000	Porsche Boxter S
2001	Nissan S15 200SX
2002	BMW E46 M3
2003	Porsche Boxter S
2004	Lamborghini Gallardo
2005	Porsche 997 Carrera S
2006	Audi B7 RS4
2007	Porsche 997 GT3
2008	Porsche 997 GT2
2009	Audi R8 V10/ Nissan GT-R
2010	Porsche 997.2 GT3 RS
2011	Nissan GT-R
2012	Porsche 991 Carrera S
2013	Audi R8 V10 Plus
2014	Porsche 991 Turbo
2015	Porsche 991 GT3
2017	Porsche 991.2 Turbo S
2018	Honda Civic Type R
2019	Porsche 991.2 GT2 RS

driving a million miles an hour to be entertained in a GT2 RS, though Morley is convinced the novelty would soon wear off. Whatever you do, don't touch the exhaust button on the open road, the resulting din is enough to give you a headache in a matter of moments.

But a matter of moments is also all it takes for the GT2 RS to comprehensively blow your mind. The expectations are so high that you don't want to spoil it by immediately flattening the throttle, like holding off opening all your Christmas presents at once.

However, like that one day in December, the concept of delayed gratification is quickly thrown in the bin and the accelerator is pressed to the floor. You can catch a GT2 RS off-boost, but it almost has to be deliberate; more often than not Frankenstein's 911 hesitates for a fraction of a second before rearranging your internal organs.

It's not quite as violently accelerative as a McLaren 720S, but that's like saying it's slightly less painful getting kicked in the face by Jackie Chan than Jet Li. You're almost guaranteed to blurt out a four-letter word as the tacho rips around to 7000rpm, and another one as the rate of acceleration refuses to slow. Down The Bend's long main straight the GT2 clocked 270km/h and was still pulling hard. The engine has masses of power everywhere, sounds evil and is made even more potent by very short gearing – Porsche, please put this gearset in the GT3!

Anyone familiar with traditional 911 dynamics will find the GT2 RS quite shocking. The front-end bite is simply incredible and there's so much power that even the inherent traction advantage provided by the rear-engine layout can't stop the rear tyres being overwhelmed at will.

On the road this makes it more engaging than its naturally aspirated flat-six siblings; for all the excitement of its screaming 9000rpm redline, a GT3 needs to be driven with total commitment to truly come alive.

On track the Porsche has no equal – Rick's biggest complaint was that it needed slicks! It refused to wear out its tyres or brakes, though the water injection did need a fill up at one stage. It also completely refutes the GT2's widowmaker reputation. A car this fast and powerful needs respect, but loosen the rear with the brakes, pick up the throttle with confidence and this 515kW 911 will happily sit sideways and bonfire its enormous rear tyres. Regardless of whether you're driving to be fast or have fun, the GT2 is utterly exhilarating.

The only real problem is the price. It's a relatively weak argument as Porsche opened the production floodgates and is still selling every GT2 RS it can build, but $645,000 (almost $800K as-tested on-road) is a crazy amount of money for a 911. As DC put it: "Porsche is charging limited-edition money for what is no longer a limited-edition car".

Personally, as incredible as the GT2 RS is, the Turbo S that won PCOTY two years back was very nearly as capable, much more liveable and almost $250K (!) cheaper. However, almost 700bhp has a way of rendering mundane criteria like value quite redundant. If you want the ultimate performance car, this is it. M

> THE 911 GT2 RS IS UTTERLY EXHILARATING

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PCOTY DEPT.
EYE WITNESS

02

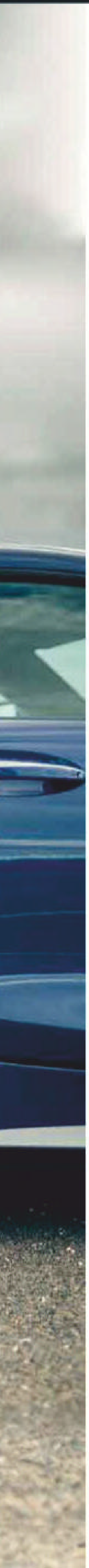
01

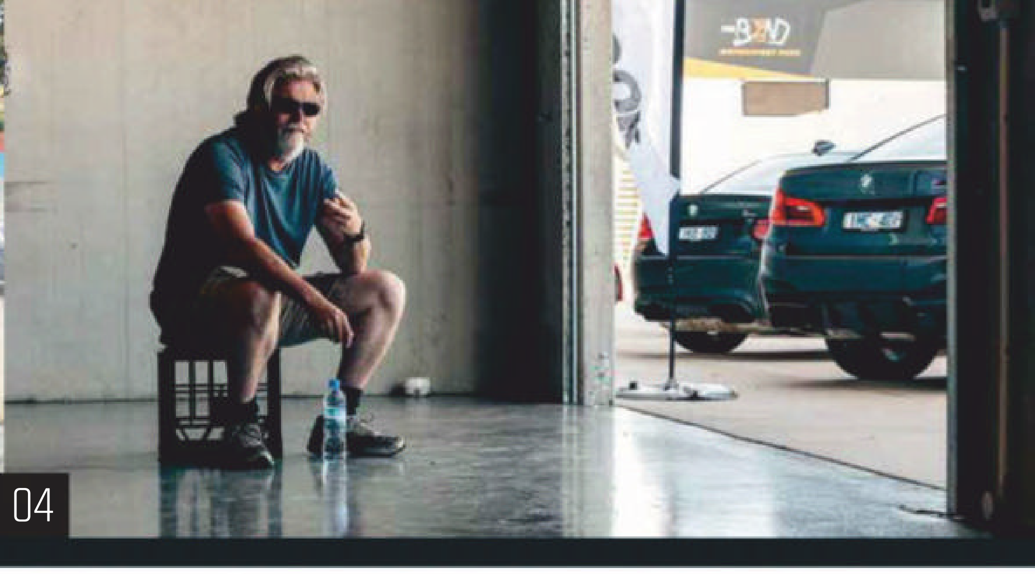
Out-takes

"DEAR DAIRY"

UNABLE TO FACE BEING LEFT ON THE PCOTY BENCH, THE FAT CONTROLLER GETS A REAL JOB – IF ONLY HE COULD SPELL…

BY TIM ROBSON + **PICS** ELLEN DEWAR/ALASTAIR BROOK





03 04

05

06

SOMETHING DOESN'T feel right. Not at all. I check my boarding pass and itinerary for a ninth time. Performance Car of The Year, for me, is like Ron Burgundy's monthly pancake breakfast; PCOTY is always on once a year, and it's always in Victoria. My ticket clearly doesn't say Business (nothing new there), though, but it clearly does say ADL. So I guess I'm still heading south…

I'm lucky to be going to ADL at all, though. A few weeks back, editor DC rang me to have "The Chat" that no editor wants to make and every freelancer sends to voicemail. Tightening budgets meant my entirely unreasonable rider, truly obscene appearance fee and best-selling book deal were a thing of the past, and my time as a PCOTY judge was over… just like that.

For me, I'm just surprised it's taken so long before someone finally cottoned on to my penchant for stealing hotel pepper grinders, how hopeless I am at playing well with others or remembering to put on deodorant. Or pants.

But, in a truly ironic twist, here I am, back on board the Bauer train as a full-time journo, and back in the PCOTY crew as a dogsbody. And that's fine with me. My demise means that young Louis gets his shot at a hallowed judge's seat, and he's a very deserving candidate. Who may well have 'a slight accident' when I 'push him bodily down a large flight of stairs' over the course of the week.

MOTOR's ADL-based ad bloke Nick picks me up in a Mustang. His own Mustang, too. "I rally a MkII Escort," he casually drops into conversation as he buys me a coffee. We are already friends for life. Our destination on this hot, blowy ADL morning is Tailem Bend. And you all know what's out there.

07

ONE
Josh "Kardashian" Robinson demanded a booty-off with the voluptuous AMG GT C

TWO
Scotty's one-man *Aliens* stage show is something to behold

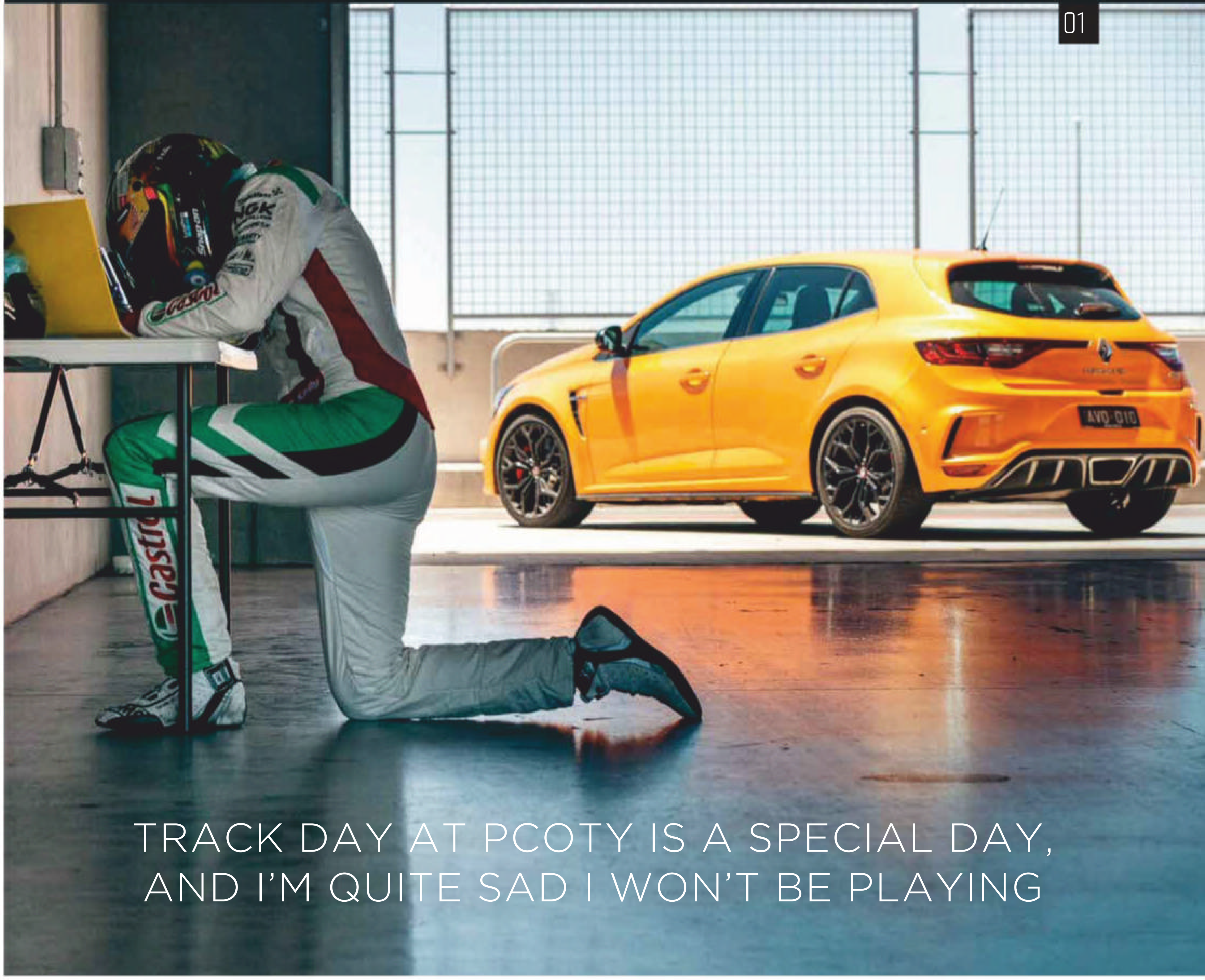
THREE
I tried to wash the RS4 with this gun, but I mist. We'll see ourselves out

FOUR
Morley's seen some budget cuts in his time but milk crates? A new low…

FIVE
When he wasn't driving a car's wheels off, Rick made a fine caterer

SIX
Robbo refused to move the Raptor until we let him sing the national anthem

SEVEN
The GT2 RS has this effect on people who've driven it



TRACK DAY AT PCOTY IS A SPECIAL DAY, AND I'M QUITE SAD I WON'T BE PLAYING

Day 1

ONE
Dear Father, please don't make me drive that weird blue French thing again. Amen

TWO
Forget PCOTY, the true competition was in the half-filled-water-bottle-flippy contest

THREE
With photos like these, it's no wonder more women don't read *MOTOR*

FOUR
Over-worked, sleep-deprived, Ellen finally went mad and became a meerkat

YOU'LL know by now that The Bend is a thing. For those who don't, it's a large racetrack complex that resides about an hour and a bit out of ADL, in a small town that used to host Mitsubishi Australia testing and very little else. Out of the sands of the nearby Big Desert, though, has sprung an oasis of motorsport that is genuinely impressive in its size, scale and scope.

This place is like what happens when a Las Vegas casino operator wants to build a racetrack, minus the slot machines in the foyer. The gleaming entry atrium, for example stands 20-metres tall, stuffed with some of the country's – and in some cases the world's – most important collectables. The first-ever factory-built right-hand drive 911? Right over there in the corner, madam, next to the Carrera GT.

Associate Editor Scotty is already on site, and it turns out that it's his birthday. "No rest for the wicked," he quips, as I sit down for a... ah, I see where you're going. Our 2019 troupe is starting to gather out the front, and it promises to be a banner year. The Audi R8 RWS catches my eye first, not least because it has large Audi Driving Experience stickers all down the sides. In my new role of Old Dogsbody, I have a sinking feeling of what's about to happen next.

The temp has ratcheted up into the mid-30s by now, and these cars aren't going to wash themselves. (Wouldn't that be nice, though?) The Alpine A110, for example, has also fronted, looking like it's been thrapped through the Victorian High Country for the weekend. Which it had been as part of its Australian launch the day prior, before being dispatched in an overnight satchel – it's small enough – to ADL, filthy dirty and oozing its Gallic smugness.

The fleet, not yet complete, is already a truly impressive set of things. Some PCOTY seasons are leaner than others, but this one is missing only a couple of names to put it in the running for Best Year Ever Oh My God. And they all need a damn wash.

03

04

Day 2

THE IRONY in spending our first afternoon at a racetrack with a motel, only to leave it to drive to another motel that is quite a long way away, isn't lost on me and the rest of the team, who stumble down for a late dinner and a celebration of Scotty's aforementioned birthday.

Morley and I try and come up with a number of PCOTYs that we've done together before senility strikes and we forget what we were even talking about, while I quietly campaign behind the scenes to not have to share a room with him. It's to no avail, and the aftermath of two gaseous giants trapped in a space the size of a cubbyhouse will no doubt render room 18 unusable for quite some time.

It's a usual PCOTY depart; meet at 7.20 for a strict 7.30 roll-out, instructs Dylan, as Louis sharpens his new pencils and packs his lunch into his unscuffed school bag. At exactly 8.17, the rumbling, exhaust-popping horde slips its way out of town on its way to Cudlee Creek, where the judges will back-to-back the cars, the vid team will vid things and the rest of us will rack up an astonishingly large bill at the local cafe, where the gorgeous coffee is only surpassed by literally oven-fresh banana bread.

It's curious to be back on this side of the fence, a place I haven't sat since the very early 2000s; PCOTY is now a well-oiled machine, with *MOTOR*'s young crew pulling together an event that's impressive in its scope and range, while the talents of the various members of the visual teams is truly impressive to watch as a waterboy.

The howl of a hi-po six, a staccato burst of exhaust or the rumble of a turboed eight occasionally pierces the tranquillity as the fleet is put through its paces. Bits of intel from the judges starts to wash back through the cafe forecourt; talk of the 911 GT2 is preceded with a naughty four-letter word and wide eyes.

As the light draws in, I sidle over to the GT2, and over a lumpy, treacherous section of classic ADL hills terrain, I let slip the dogs of war. Others might say 'went for a drive', but one does not simply drive the GT2.

Its innate tactility, its astonishing agility and its shocking, exploitable, frightening, exhilarating pace takes me back to my first PCOTY in 2001, where I was thrown the keys to a 996 GT3. The journey between the two machines is, for me, a snapshot of the two ends of my PCOTY life, and I revel the 15 short-yet-long minutes I have aboard this obscenely expensive, but utterly amazing machine.

FIVE
Louis, no! The Raptor is only a support vehicle!

SIX
James's strategy to get his own motel room was high-risk but proved effective

SEVEN
Bugger off, this is a private moment between this camera case and I

EIGHT
It was a good week for South Australia's BP petrol stations

05

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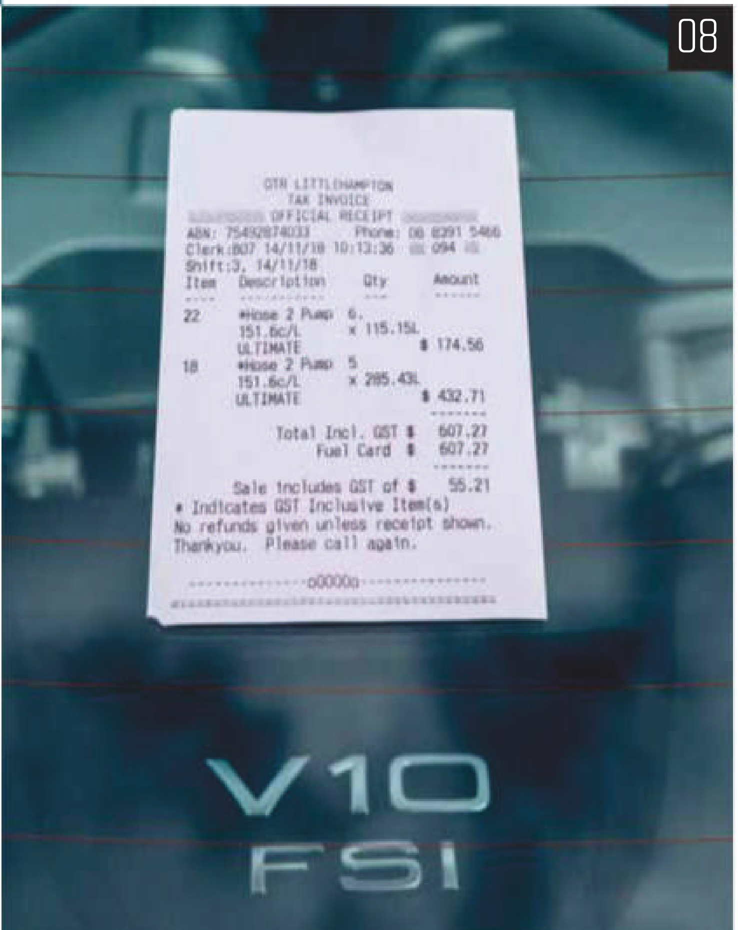

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                                 -------
          Sale includes GST of $    55.21
* Indicates GST Inclusive Item(s)
No refunds given unless receipt shown.
Thankyou.  Please call again.

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02

01

Day 3

WAKENED by Morley's snoring, I watch the sun rise over The Bend's front straight from our hotel window. It's amazing to be able to write that… track day at PCOTY is a truly special day of the year, and I'm quite sad I won't be playing. I do, however, like standing in pit lanes and yelling, which is what I do all day.

Guest judge Rick Kelly joins the crew, and instantly impresses all with his no-nonsense approach to the job of flogging seven bells out of the fleet and talking into a camera. His approach is methodical and measured, and his feedback is detailed and precise. His descriptions, too, are perfect; "what the %^& is this thing?" he exclaims of the A110, cutting through the hype around the wee Frenchy.

Scotty is revelling in his sideways antics, DC's weird black helmet is present and correct, and Morley… well, Morley is around the joint. Louis, too, is having the time of his life, punting with accuracy and pace in equal measure. What a jerk (not that I'm jealous…).

I console myself with tyre pressures and cleaning and other stuff, and blag a lap in the Mustang before the festivities wind up. "Just do a short lap, Robbo," comes the radio call. Not today, I think, as I wind 'er up for a second flyby down the straight as the two-way crackles in indignation. I've had my share of days like these, and if this is the last one… well, it's been a genuine blast.

My boss and good friend Ged Bulmer – he who put me on my first PCOTY gig – is in town to host our Hankook and Castrol guests, and we share a quiet chat in pit lane as the field assembles for its big shoot. "It's been fun, Robbo," says Ged, who'll resign a week later. "It has, mate," I reply, and we stand quietly for a moment, before Ellen yells at us to get out of the shot. M

➜

ONE
We don't care about your Instagram post, Robbo, get out of the bloody shot!

TWO
There is never a bad time to add yet another idea to The List of Ways to Annoy David Morley

THREE
It's called a slav squat… ah never mind

FOUR
Louis re-aligning his Qi or adjusting his Feng Shui or whatever it is kids do these days

FIVE
Having surveyed the quality of his workers, boss Ged Bulmer promptly resigned shortly after

SIX
Chris and James helpfully pointing out the way to Adelaide Airport

SEVEN
Dicky Knee has traded in his classic blue cap for a nice Hankook one

DVA·11R
RAPTOR

03 04

OVER A LUMPY SECTION OF THE HILLS I LET SLIP THE DOGS OF WAR. OTHERS MIGHT SAY 'WENT FOR A DRIVE', BUT ONE DOES NOT SIMPLY DRIVE THE GT2 RS

05

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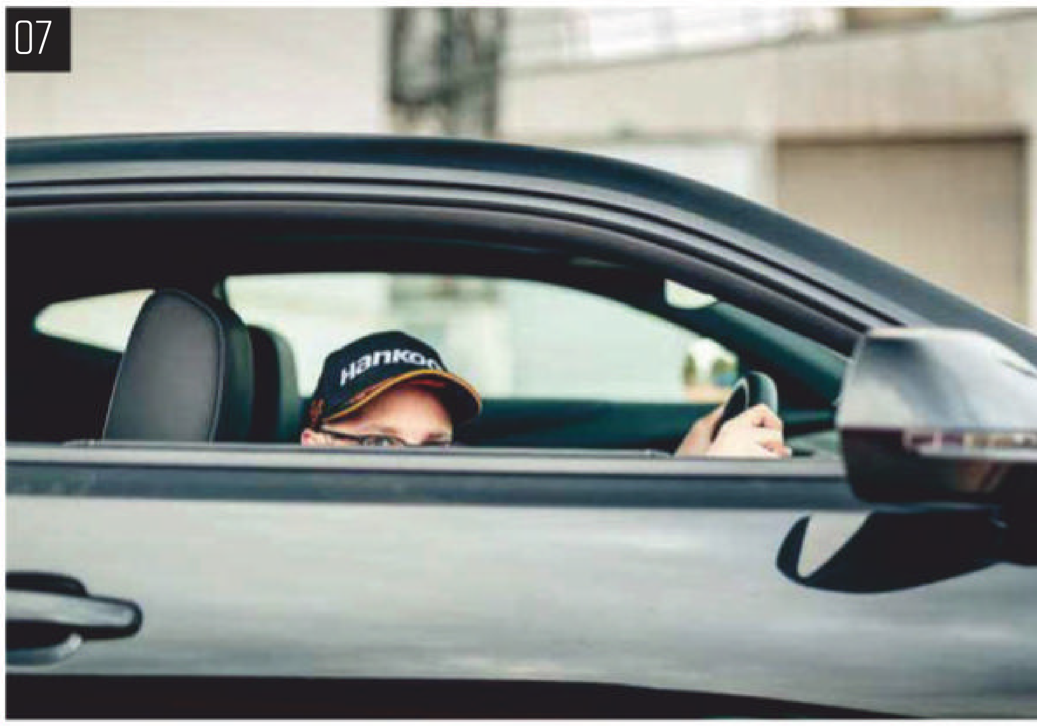
07



WORSHIPPING THE DEPRECIATION GODS

VOLVO

850 R

VOLVO'S FIVE-CYLINDER, BIG-BOOTED 850 R WILL HELP YOU LIVE OUT YOUR 1990S TOURING CAR DREAMS. HERE'S HOW TO BUY A GOOD ONE

DESPITE ITS BOXY DESIGN (and the fact the 'coolest' version was the wagon), the 850 marked the point at which Volvos became fun to drive. It may have looked much like the 740 and 760 models that it replaced, but it was all new.

It was billed as 'a dynamic car with four world firsts' when it was launched – a transversely mounted five-cylinder engine, sophisticated new 'Delta-Link' rear suspension, self-adjusting front seat belts and Volvo's famous Side Impact Protection System (SIPS). Most are front-wheel drive but a four-wheel drive model followed later.

Most of the 850s available are 2.0 and 2.5 petrol models. However, it's the boosted 2.3-litre cars that we care about. Or, more to the point, the turbocharged T5, T5-R and 850R, which offer genuine pace. All were mainstream production models, although finding an example of any in good condition today is reasonably hard given few were sold here.

The rare and highly sought-after limited-run T5-R is the most difficult to track down. The T5-R proved to be such a success globally that Volvo turned it into a mainstream production model – the 850 R – and offered a four-wheel drive version. The all-wheel drive system proved to be unreliable, however, and now seems to be pretty much extinct.

Interestingly, the 850 (in wagon form initially) also paved the way for the Swedish marque's return to the racetrack.

'91

TO

'96

YEARS IN PRODUCTION

6964 T5-Rs were built across sedan and estate variants

850 R

VITAL CHECKS

BODYWORK Start by checking the leading edge of the bonnet, which gets stone-chipped then begins to rust. The front guards corrode just ahead of and behind the wheelarches and the inner guards get holed where they meet the chassis rail. On estates check along the lower edge of the rear side windows; corrosion festers beneath the rubber trim and by the time you know there's a problem it's too late to do anything about it.

The rear wheelarches are also prone to rotting along their leading edges from the inside out and examining the spare wheel well from underneath will probably reveal that it's holed. It doesn't help that the lacquer peels, weakening the paint and leading to corrosion.

OILY BITS There are two five-cylinder engine families; one petrol and one diesel. The all-aluminium petrol unit came in 2.0- and 2.5-litre guises with the smaller unit available as a 10-valve or 20-valve. There was also a 2.3 turbo in the T5, T5-R and 850 R.

A common issue with the petrol engine is an oil leak from the main rear seal between the engine and gearbox. You can fix it yourself (though access is poor) but a specialist will charge $500-$900, despite the fact that the part itself

STU 232 R
ENG

03

WAGON RIVALS

VS HSV MANTA
HSV turned its hand to the Commodore wagon and added a worked 5.0-litre V8 with 180kW/400Nm into the equation. It also came in a sedan body style.

EF XR6 WAGON
The venerable 4.0-litre straight six sends 164kW/366Nm to the rears and was available with a five-speed manual. If you want a booted Ford V8, try the Fairmont Ghia.

NISSAN STAGEA
With a 206kW/333Nm RB25DET and AWD, the 1998 Stagea is in a different performance league. However, if you want one, you'll be dealing with imports.

is very cheap. The turbo return pipe seal also hardens, leading to the underside being coated in oil; replacement is a straightforward job.

The Positive Crankcase Ventilation (PCV) system clogs up leading to a build-up of pressure in the crankcase and blown seals. The set-up comprises a series of small vacuum lines which become brittle and break, leading to uneven running and a loss of power. The lines are hidden under the intake manifold, but it's worth inspecting them every other service and replacing the hoses every 130,000km or so.

Mass Airflow (MAF) sensors fail on non-turbo models because the thermostat in the air filter housing gives up the ghost. This leads to hot air flowing through the MAF, which cooks it. A new MAF sensor is easy to fit.

If the engine is reluctant to start or rev the fuel pump relay has probably failed. A new one is cheap and just slots in. Beware any 850 whose timing belt hasn't been replaced within the last 80,000km or five years – the engines are an interference fit so a snapped belt can destroy them. A new water pump with improved impellers should be fitted at the same time. The engine's top mount/stabiliser is a known weak point, but the bushing can appear intact even when it isn't. The bottom engine mount can fail too, although this is rare.

All 850s were fitted with a catalytic converter – it doesn't generally give problems, but a full new exhaust can be costly depending on which engine is fitted.

All 850s got a five-speed manual gearbox as standard with

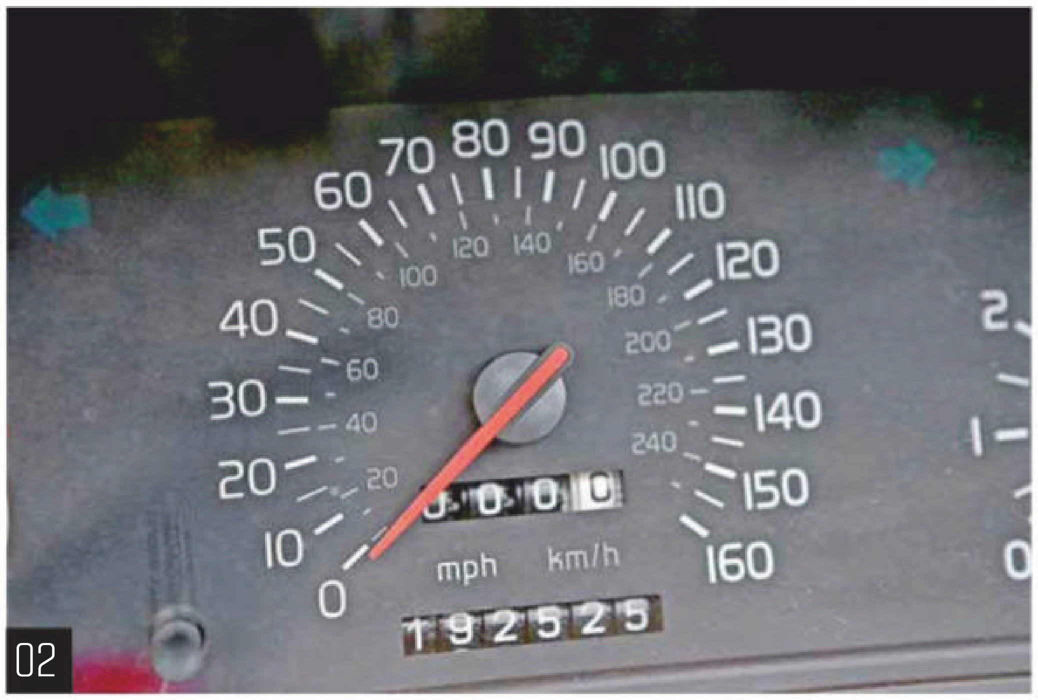
IN SPECS: VOLVO 850R ESTATE

DRIVETRAIN	5-door, 5-seat wagon
ENGINE	2319cc inline-5, DOHC, 20v, turbo
POWER	186kW @ 5400rpm
TORQUE	350Nm @ 2400-5000rpm
TRANSMISSION	5-speed manual
USED RANGE	$8000 to $30,000

VOLVO RETURNS TO THE TRACK... WITH A WAGON!

VOLVO WASN'T without success on track before the 850. The 240T was a winner overseas and in Oz (Robbie Francevic winning the 1986 ATCC). However, when the Swedish marque announced a return to racing with Tom Walkinshaw (TWR), no-one expected it to be the estate! A blatant publicity stunt to change the image of the then new 850, two wagons raced in the '94 BTCC, with a best race finish of fifth (Rickard Rydell). It was replaced with the race-winning sedan for '95/'96.

01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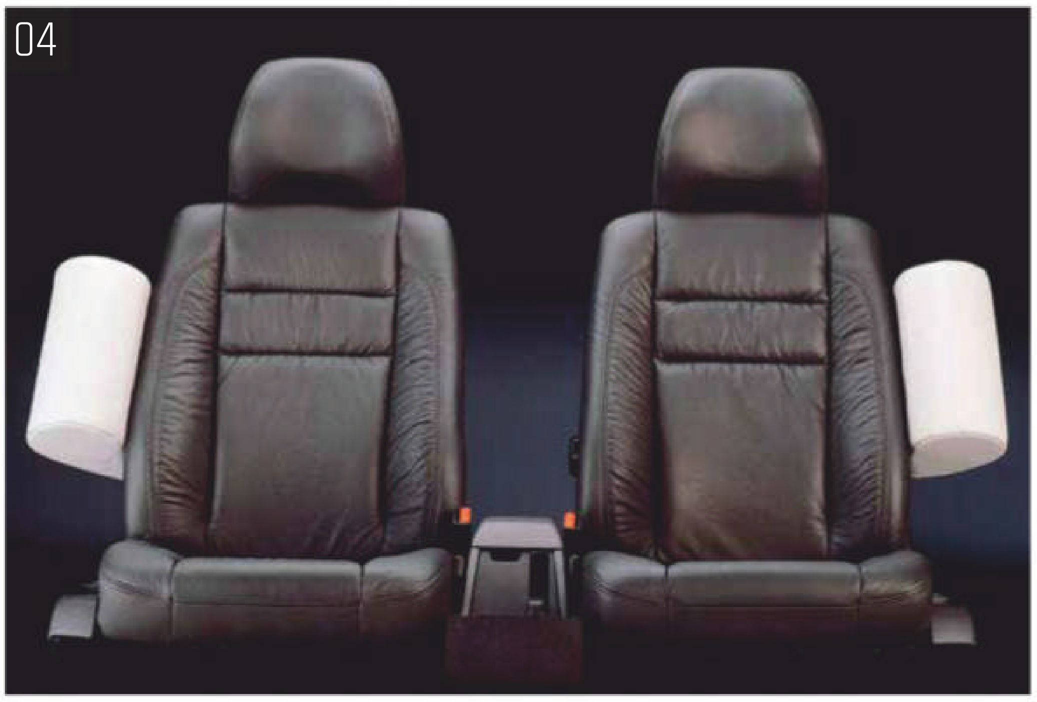

04

THE VOLVO 850 WAS BILLED AS 'A DYNAMIC CAR WITH FOUR WORLD FIRSTS' WHEN IT WAS LAUNCHED

a four-speed automatic a popular option. The manuals will rack up enormous mileages before they start to wear and the clutches are strong, too. The automatic gearbox is also tough, although those fitted during the first two years of production weren't as durable as later versions. The ATE/Teves ABS module fitted after 1995 tends to fail – the warning light on the dashboard staying on when the engine is running is the biggest clue. It can be rebuilt for a relatively low cost.

Make sure there's no play in the front wheel bearings because they can't be replaced on their own – you have to fit a new hub, complete with bearings, although it's an easy job. A set of bearings typically lasts 95,000km.

Groaning from the front at low speed as the wheels are turned points to failed strut mounts. They have a rubber-encased upper spring seat and the rubber perishes, so open the bonnet and look for signs of the rubber cracking or pulling away from the centre sleeve.

Rattling from the front on bumpy roads suggests worn anti-roll bar links. Volvo changed the design after the first year of production so it's worth upgrading an early car's anti-roll bar to the later design. It's more expensive, but also more durable.

Cars built in 1993 have four-bolt wheels; five-bolt items were fitted from 1994. Although the five-bolt wheels share the same PCD as the older rear-wheel drive models, different offsets mean they can't be fitted to an 850.

↑

ONE
The dash design is very '90s boxy Volvo, but it was also up to date with luxuries expected of the brand

TWO
A speedo topping out at 240km/h seems reasonable... no doubt Peter Brock exceeded that when he raced an 850 sedan in 1996

THREE
850s taking on the 1994 British Touring Car Championship

FOUR
850 was the first car in the world to offer side airbags, which activate mechanically if hit hard enough

TRIM AND ELECTRICS Most 850s have cloth trim, but many got either full leather or leather with cloth or Alcantara. The latter looks great, however, it isn't easy to clean – T5-Rs have it on the bolsters, lesser models have it in the middle.

Heated seats are fitted to most 850s, but it's worth checking that they're working because the heating elements can fail. Fitting a new one can be a fiddly job, so most owners don't tend to bother.

The 850 came with plenty of standard kit. Many buyers want air-conditioning, but this was initially an option on the 850 so isn't fitted to all cars. However, it's not always reliable and repair costs can be high. The condenser sits in front of the radiator so it's vulnerable to puncture damage from flying stones and road debris. New ones are about $250 and you'll have to get the system regassed, too. Later cars got a stone guard to protect against damage – check it's still fitted.

The aircon evaporator can also fail and replacing it involves taking the dashboard out. It doesn't help that only left-hand drive replacements are currently available. One other issue to look out for concerns the evaporator, which gets wet from condensation, soaks up dust sucked in from the heater fan and all-but guarantees corrosion.

Finding a used 850 R in Australia will be the hardest task, particularly in good condition, but it's a quirky offering with decent performance to boot. M

02 . 2019

01 CARS REVIEWED

WE TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

the Garage

HYUNDAI i30 N

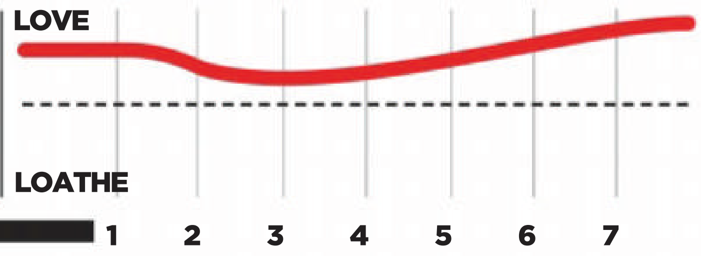
1998cc turbo inline-4, FWD, 202kW/353Nm, 1429kg, $39,990

MONTH 08

AVERAGE FUEL CONSUMPTION 11.1L/100KM

TOTAL DISTANCE 7280KM

MONTHLY RELATIONSHIP GRAPH



END OF TERM

Goodbye

POINT PROVEN

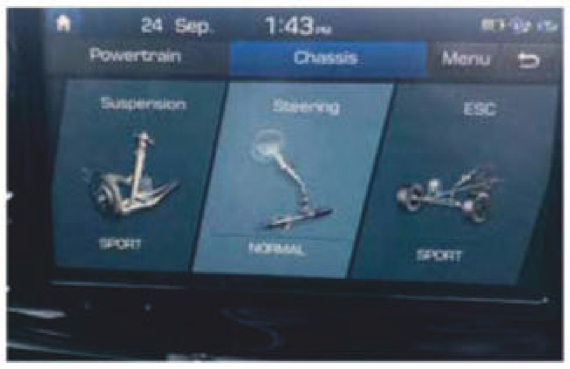
All good things must come to an end

SOME CARS SHINE in isolation, only for their foibles to become clear in comparison to their rivals. The Hyundai i30 N is in the opposite camp; it certainly feels like a very polished hot hatch in isolation, but only when you drive it in the context of other performance machinery do you realise what a high level it achieves.

This has been a more thorough long-term test than most, partly because of the i30 N's broad abilities and partly because as one of last year's most important releases, we felt it was important to put this newcomer through the wringer, so to speak. As well as appearing at Bang For Your Bucks and Performance Car of the Year, six months spent with 'my' i30 N included more than 7000km of road testing, a comparison test against its closest rivals, straight-line performance testing, track testing at Sandown and Winton and club-level competition in a hillclimb and a tarmac rallysprint.

As such, we feel well placed to deliver a definitive verdict on Hyundai's first hottie: it's excellent. Let's explain why, bit by bit. The drivetrain is the i30 N's weakest link. Its on-paper stats of 202kW and 353Nm, with 378Nm available on overboost, are impressive,

ABOVE
The i30 N on its way to victory and the Bryant Park hillclimb last year – this is a very quick car on the right circuit



01 Interior is plain and functional. We'd spec the Premium for keyless entry and go and heated electric seats

02 Lightweight wheels look great – hopefully Hyundai finds a way to offer them as an option

03 Configurability an i30 N strong suit, but steering doesn't really need adjusting from Normal as 'sportier' modes just add weight

> ON ROAD OR TRACK, YOU'RE GUARANTEED TO GET OUT OF THE i30 N WITH A MASSIVE GRIN ON YOUR FACE

and the 0-100km/h claim of 6.2sec is competitive given the sole choice of a six-speed manual gearbox.

On the road the engine is very effective. Response is excellent and the broad spread of mid-range torque from 2000-5000rpm gives it the ability to pull vigorously out of almost any corner. On track it's less impressive, the smaller turbo that's responsible for the quick build-up of boost running out of puff beyond 5500rpm. If there has to be a trade-off, it's difficult to argue with Hyundai's decision to prioritise road flexibility over redline fireworks. That said, I wish it sounded a bit better. The vicious rally car-style pops and bangs on the over-run are nice, but were they made so overt to distract from the fact that the basic engine noise isn't anything special? Overall, the engine is solid but nothing amazing.

The gearbox fares similarly. Overall the shift quality is very nice, with each successive gear selected with a flick of the wrist. The i30 N is an easy car to stall, though; when I first wrote this I got an earbashing from Hyundai PR but pretty much everyone in the *MOTOR* office is in agreement. The fact that the first thing Rick Kelly did behind the wheel of the i30 N at PCOTY was stall it means I'm sticking by the assessment. It has anti-stall software but it's not strong enough to use no throttle and I suspect applying any throttle manually deactivates the 'help'. No big deal, but it requires acclimation.

Another bugbear was the gear lever occasionally getting caught on the 5-6 shift; it's the work of a moment to find similar complaints on i30 N owners' forums around the world so it's a common issue. Again, not a huge drama, but annoying, as is the large gap between second and third gear. Second is short, ending at 99km/h, whereas third is quite tall, stretching to 149km/h. Did Hyundai choose a short second to improve the 0-60mph (97km/h) time, or was it the only gearset available? Not sure, but it hampers the 0-100km/h time, as does the non-killable traction control in first gear, which cuts in to tame the vicious axle tramp and keep the driveshafts and CVs in one piece. A slightly longer second gear would make the i30 quicker against the clock but, far more importantly, better to drive.

And that's saying something, because it's already fantastic. On road or track, you're guaranteed to get out of an i30 N with a massive grin on your face and probably have to wait for whoever you're driving with to catch up. It's precise and grippy yet also adjustable, with strong brakes and a great front-end courtesy of that electronically-controlled limited-slip diff. The i30 N's interior is a bit plain (though very functional, I have no complaints) because Hyundai spent the money on the mechanicals and the decision has paid huge dividends. Ideally, there'd be a little more ride comfort; the new i30 N Fastback has a softer setup and it'll be interesting to see if this carries over to the hatch.

Hyundai has talked up the track day prowess of its first hot hatch and, by and large, the i30 N delivers. If you're a regular circuit goer we'd recommend racier brake pads and better fluid as the brakes on NBT 60C were pretty tired by the end of our loan. Likewise, a set of semi-slicks will increase your enjoyment as the stock camber settings don't let the standard Pirellis bite into the tarmac hard enough. Best of all, neither track use or the fitment of sticky tyres will void your warranty.

For a first attempt, the i30 N is a stunning achievement. It's the perfect hot hatch: practical and undemanding in everyday use, yet it comes alive at the first sniff of a twisty road. All for $40K or so before on-road costs. There are minor flaws, but none are deal breakers and most probably already being rectified for future updates. We'd say Hyundai is set to feature towards the pointy end of the hot hatch segment for years to come. – SN

PROS *and* CONS

03 THINGS THAT NEED TO STAY

1. Adjustable chassis
2. Stamina
3. Broad powerband

03 JOBS FOR FACELIFT TIME

1. Revise gearbox
2. Engine sound
3. Jazz up interior

OIL EXPLAINED

BY CHRIS THOMPSON

What's oil the fuss about?

It's the blood of your engine, and modern oil development is serious business. We grill an oil engineer about how the game has changed

SOMETIMES WE FORGET that inside our cars, as we belt them around racetracks or tip them into hairpin corners on mountain roads, is a finely tuned ecosystem of fluids and mechanical parts working in unison to create power that's then sent to the tarmac. A vital and little-celebrated part of this ecosystem is engine lubricant, or motor oil, which most enthusiasts have at least a basic understanding of. But oil has changed a lot in the past few decades, and even the past few years.

Dr Jonathan Green is an expert technologist in the Castrol Edge product development team in the UK, with more than 12 years' experience within BP/Castrol. We asked him to explain how oil has changed, where it's heading, and why it isn't as simple as 'the yellow stuff from the bottle'.

Primarily, he says the main driver of the way engine oil is composed, developed, and what its goal is depends on car technology and changing standards within industry and law. As someone working in the field of high-end oil, vehicle performance is also a major factor.

"Over the last 20-30 years, the main changes we've seen are the reduction in viscosity, and also around the introduction of after-treatment devices related to emissions and reducing the environmental footprint of vehicles," Dr Green says.

"The devices we have now, whether it be three-way catalysts or diesel particulate filters, they bring some constraints that most people might not be aware of. The aim is to ensure those devices are not impacted more than necessary over their lifetime.

"There are certain things in lubricant that we've had to change. We've had to reduce the amount of SAPS, or sulphated ash, phosphorus, and sulphur. That's one of the key changes, reducing the use of SAPS in order to ensure we have a lubricant that's working well with the engine and with the after-treatment device."

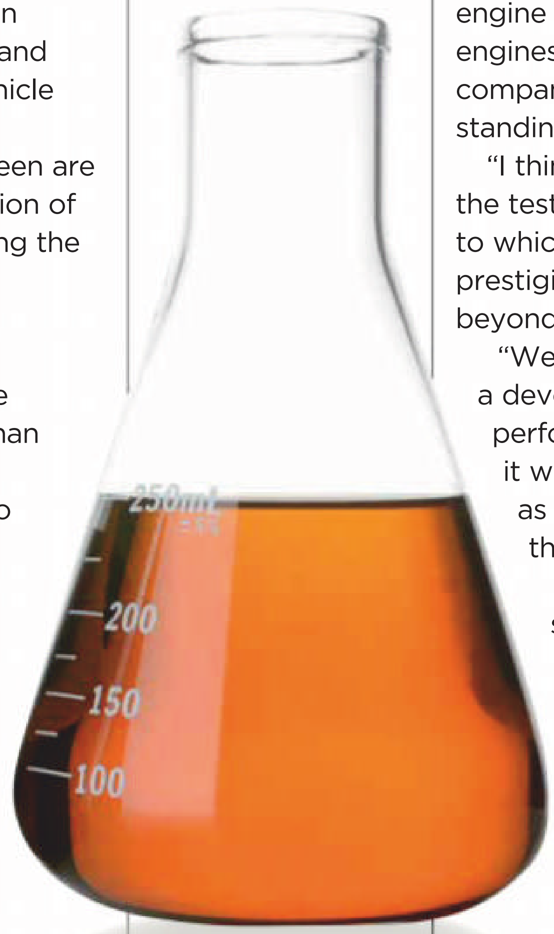
Dr Green says developing motor oil, or engine lubricant, often comes down to a balance between delivering the right level of durability for high-pressure turbocharged engines that are becoming more common, and allowing the engine to move without resistance from the oil.

It's development like this that sets the high-end oil apart from the sort of oil you can pick up cheaply at the supermarket or automotive outlet.

"We put an awful lot of time and money into developing for these top-tier specifications. We go the extra mile to prove to OEMs that we can provide real-world benefits to the end user.

"The OEM who develops the car has an agenda from what they want, and that's not always too dissimilar from what their customer wants. We demonstrate through various techniques that our customer is going to receive those benefits.

BELOW
Dr Green says it's best to make sure the oil you're using is to the OEM's specification, and not just from a one-size-fits-all bottle you keep in the shed



"We've done a lot of testing on a scientific level to show our titanium technology provides [better] fluid strength under [extreme] conditions… but then we've gone further than that and demonstrated it in real hardware as well."

That 'real hardware' testing means that rather than relying solely on looking at the oil in a lab to determine its effectiveness as an engine lubricant, Castrol engineers and technicians will use real engines to ensure the oil performs in the real world rather than just on paper.

"The kind of programs I work on with Castrol Edge tend to encompass a huge amount of engine testing. That engine testing is with a range of gasoline engines and diesel engines. We have extensive co-engineering that goes on with companies such as Ford and Jaguar Land Rover and long-standing technology partnerships with Volkswagen and Audi.

"I think most people would be surprised at how exhaustive the testing is. There's no stone left unturned in regards to which technical areas are looked at to receive these prestigious OEM approvals and the further work we conduct beyond that.

"We can really say by the time we get to the end of a development that these products have proved their performance in a range of tests. The tests are very severe – it would be extremely difficult for a customer to drive a car as hard on the road, and even on the track – as some of these engines are worked."

"We've run a V10 engine through simulating a whole season of a major single-seater race series, simulating every track as driven by a professional race driver and then gone on to simulate, with the same oil in the same engine, a key 24-hour endurance race series all on oil that's just been topped up.

"Both the engine and oil made it to the end without any problems at all and in very good condition.

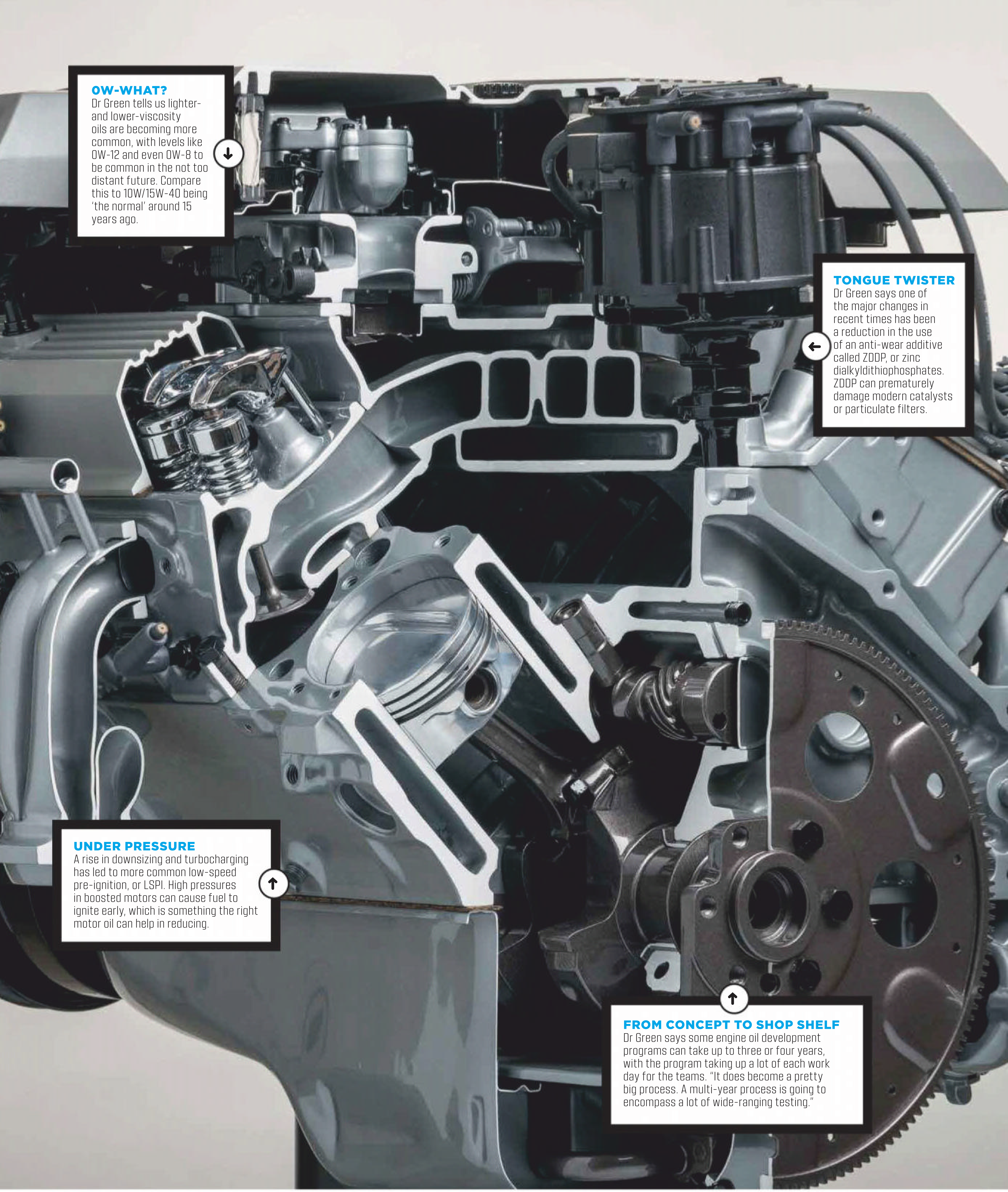
"This is not something that was required by the OEM at all, this is something we've done to push the limits when we asked ourselves 'what's the most severe thing we could do?'

"At the end of that the condition of the engine was amazing considering what it had been through. That's far more severe than any consumer would ever subject their Audi R8 to."

In terms of the near future of motor oil development, it's very closely based on the development of new drivetrains. Mild hybrid and electrification is the latest trend to impact the way oil is designed and developed.

"As hybridisation levels increase there's going to be a lot more running on just electric power with the engine only cutting in every so often. That's something that's very demanding of the lubricant and an area where we've focused a lot of work and now understand well."

"I THINK MOST PEOPLE WOULD BE SURPRISED HOW EXHAUSTIVE THE TESTING IS … THE TESTS ARE VERY SEVERE"



0W-WHAT?
Dr Green tells us lighter- and lower-viscosity oils are becoming more common, with levels like 0W-12 and even 0W-8 to be common in the not too distant future. Compare this to 10W/15W-40 being 'the normal' around 15 years ago.

TONGUE TWISTER
Dr Green says one of the major changes in recent times has been a reduction in the use of an anti-wear additive called ZDDP, or zinc dialkyldithiophosphates. ZDDP can prematurely damage modern catalysts or particulate filters.

UNDER PRESSURE
A rise in downsizing and turbocharging has led to more common low-speed pre-ignition, or LSPI. High pressures in boosted motors can cause fuel to ignite early, which is something the right motor oil can help in reducing.

FROM CONCEPT TO SHOP SHELF
Dr Green says some engine oil development programs can take up to three or four years, with the program taking up a lot of each work day for the teams. "It does become a pretty big process. A multi-year process is going to encompass a lot of wide-ranging testing."

02 . 2019

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Hot Source

THE FAST GUIDE TO QUICK CARS

400 CARS Rated

★ BLOCK
★★ SWIPE LEFT
★★★ CHAT
★★★★ DATE
★★★★★ MARRY

CRACKING THE CODE

- All performance figures are manufacturer claims, those in italics are as-tested by *MOTOR*.
- Figures for an automatic variant have an asterisk.
- Prices listed are manufacturer RRP, exclusive of on-roads. "DA" denotes driveaway price.
- Italicised fuel consumption figures are those collected on test.
- Engines are listed by configuration, capacity and means of induction. For example, I4/1.6T= turbocharged 1.6-litre inline four. Torque figures made by an engine's over-boost function are contained in parentheses.
- **Red** denotes a new addition. **Green** denotes a model update.

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
Abarth www.fiat.com.au/abarth												
595		$26,990 (5m) $28,990 (5s)	I4/1.4T	107/5500	206/2000	front	1035	103	7.8	–	5.8	**2.5** Abarth entry point now cheaper with a rorty engine, but barely qualifies as a performance car
595C		$29,990 (5m) $31,990 (5s)	I4/1.4T	107/5500	206/2000	front	1075	100	8.0	–	6.0	**2.0** Stylish and torquey urban runabout struggles for fast car cred
595 Competizione	May 18	$31,990 (5m) $33,990 (5s)	I4/1.4T	132/5500	250/3000	front	1045	126	6.7	–	5.8	**3.0** Recent power hike and price cut welcome, though serious ride/handling issues remain
595C Competizione		$35,990 (5m) $37,990 (5s)	I4/1.4T	132/5500	250/3000	front	1085	122	6.9	–	6.0	**2.5** Monza exhaust is fantastic with the roof down, just avoid the MTA gearbox like the plague
124 Spider	Aug 17	$41,990 (6m) $43,990 (6a)	I4/1.4T	125/5500	250/2500	rear	1060	118	*7.31*	*15.24*	–	**4.0** Sounds great, looks cool and feels faster than an MX-5, but actually isn't
Alfa Romeo www.alfaromeo.com.au												
Giulietta Veloce		$42,000 (6dc)	I4/1.7T	177/5750*	340/2000	front	1299	133	*6.02**	*14.29**	6.8	**3.5** Involving handling and impressive pace blighted by poor ride, intrusive ESP and flawed driving position
4C	May 15	$89,000 (6dc)	I4/1.7T	177/6000	350/2200	rear	1025	173	4.5	–	6.8	**4.0** Clever construction and a proper driving event, but we're suspicious about its ride on Aussie roads
4C Spider		$99,000 (6dc)	I4/1.7T	177/6000	350/2200	rear	1035	171	4.5	–	–	**4.0** Carbon monocoque means there's almost no dynamic penalty, or room to put the roof
Giulia Veloce	Sep 17	$71,985 (8a)	I4/2.0T	206/6000	400/2200	rear	1429	144	*5.71*	*13.92*	6.1	**3.5** Impressive road car, but QV looks and fine handling undermined by light steering and unkillable ESP
Giulia Quadrifoglio	Feb 18	$143,900 (8a)	V6/2.9TT	375/6500	600/2500	rear	1585	246	*4.31*	*12.20*	8.2	**4.5** Alfa returns to form in style with great engine, brilliant chassis, just lacks that final few per cent
Stelvio Quadrifoglio		$148,900 (8a)	V6/2.9TT	375/6500	600/2500	all	1830	205	3.8	–	10.2	**4.0** Like a Giulia SUV, with extra 250kg and all-wheel drive, though we're promised a rear-drive feel
Alpina www.alpinaautomobiles.com.au												
B3 Biturbo S		$142,900 (8a)	I6/3.0TT	324/6250	660/3000	rear	1705	190	4.3	–	7.9	**4.0** If you want a fast BMW 3 Series but find the M3 too full on, this could be the car for you
B3 Biturbo S Touring		$149,900 (8a)	I6/3.0TT	324/6250	660/3000	rear	1780	182	4.3	–	7.9	**4.0** Too soft to truly be an M3 Touring, but given its intended role that's not a bad thing
B4 Biturbo S	Nov 18	$149,900 (8a)	I6/3.0TT	324/6250	660/3000	rear	1690	192	4.2	–	7.9	**4.0** Superb road manners and stylish looks, but you'll have to continually explain why you didn't buy an M4
B4 Biturbo S Convertible		$159,900 (8a)	I6/3.0TT	324/6250	660/3000	rear	1915	169	4.3	–	8.3	**3.5** Arguably a more sensible choice than an M4 Cabriolet, but very heavy and expensive with options
B5 Biturbo		$210,000 (8a)	V8/4.4TT	447/6250	800/3000	all	2015	222	3.5	–	10.5	**4.0** Beat new M5 to market with epic torque and acceleration, but it remains an unknown quantity
B7 Biturbo	Feb 18	$369,720 (8a)	V8/4.4TT	447/6250	800/3000	rear	2035	219	4.5	–	10.4	**4.0** If you value exclusivity and care not for resale, this V8 limo is worth a look
Alpine www.alpinecars.com.au												
Pure		$97,000 (7dc)	I4/1.8T	185/6000	320/2000	rear	1103	168	4.5	12.7	6.2	**4.5** Stripped back, driver-focused version to go up against the S55-powered BMW M2 Competition
Legende		$103,500 (7dc)	I4/1.8T	185/6000	320/2000	rear	1103	168	4.5	12.7	6.2	**4.5** Pays homage to the 1960s-era A110 Berlinette 1600S with two-tone wheels and adds more luxury
Premiere Edition	Feb 19	$106,500 (7dc)	I4/1.8T	185/6000	320/2000	rear	1103	168	*4.79*	*12.9*	6.2	**4.5** Superbly light and fun coupe sits above 4C, but below Cayman – though is it too close to the latter on price?
Aston Martin www.astonmartin.com												
Vantage V8	Sep 18	$299,950 (8a)	V8/4.0TT	375/6000	685/2000	rear	1530	245	3.6	–	10.5	**4.5** Looks fantastic and pairs beastly AMG V8 with a playful rear-drive chassis
DB11 V8		$368,000 (8a)	V8/4.0TT	375/6000	675/2000	rear	1760	213	4.0	–	9.9	**4.0** Sportiest DB11 benefits from AMG twin-turbo V8 and revised suspension for a sharper drive
DB11 V8 Volante		$398,495 (8a)	V8/4.0TT	375/6000	675/2000	rear	1870	201	4.1	–	10.0	**4.0** V8-only for now, with the ability to whip the soft-top off in 14 seconds via remote
DB11	Apr 18	$395,000 (8a)	V12/5.2TT	447/6500	700/1500	rear	1770	253	3.9	–	11.3	**4.5** Exactly what a luxury GT should be; magnificent engine, chassis finely judged
DB11 AMR	Jul 18	$428,000 (8a)	V12/5.2TT	470/6500	700/1500	rear	–	–	3.7	–	11.4	**4.5** AM-Racing version replaces Launch Edition with more power, faster performance, same price
DBS Superleggera	Sep 18	$517,000 (8a)	V12/5.2TT	533/6500	900/1800	rear	1693	315	3.5	–	–	**4.0** Drop-dead gorgeous; stunning acceleration; very comfortable; it's no 812 Superfast in the corners
Vanquish S		$489,950 (8a)	V12/5.9	444/7000	630/5500	rear	1739	255	3.5	–	13.1	**4.0** Vanquish is now better than ever in its twilight years, though the ride isn't very GT-like
Vanquish S Volante		$526,950 (8a)	V12/5.9	444/7000	630/5500	rear	1844	241	3.5	–	13.1	**3.5** Very heavy, a little wobbly, but you'd forgive it for those looks and that engine note
Vanquish S Ultimate		$518,995 (8a)	V12/5.9	444/7000	630/5500	rear	1739	249	3.5	–	13.1	**4.0** 175-unit farewell edition gets no extra power, but plenty of extra toys
Vanquish S Ultimate Volante		$555,995 (8a)	V12/5.9	444/7000	630/5500	rear	1849	234	3.5		13.1	**3.5** At this price, we'd (much) rather a DBS Superleggera, thanks
Rapide S		$382,500 (8a)	V12/5.9	411/6650	630/5500	rear	1990	207	4.9	–	–	**3.0** When you want to be James Bond but need to take the kids to school, as only kids will fit in the rear
Rapide AMR		$459,950 (8a)	V12/5.9	433/7000	630/5500	rear	1990	218	4.4	–	–	**3.0** A more rapid Rapide grand finale looks as hot as ever, but feeling its age against newer rivals

Audi www.audi.com.au

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
A1 1.8 TFSI Sport	Aug 15	$40,400 (7dc)	I4/1.8T	141/5400	250/1250	front	1205	117	6.9	–	5.9	**3.5** There's fun to be found, but looks increasingly expensive next to the latest baby hot hatches
S1 Sportback	May 16	$49,900 (6m)	I4/2.0T	170/6000	370/1600	all	1340	127	*5.68*	*13.89*	7.1	**4.0** Punchy engine, involving dynamics, cool looks and a price (with options) that makes no sense
A3 40 TFSI quattro		$49,500 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	140/6200	320/1250	all	1380	96	6.8	–	6.6	**3.0** Quicker than you'd expect, but quattro unnecessary at this power level
S3 Sportback	Apr 17	$64,200 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	213/6500	380/1800	all	1530	139	*4.8*	–	6.6	**4.0** Under-rated and really quite fun, but give us the Euro-spec 221kW!
S3 Sedan	Jan 17	$65,800 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	213/6500	380/1800	all	1530	139	4.8	–	6.5	**4.0** Sleek looks, compact size, pokey performance and good value, but we'd opt for the hatch
S3 Cabriolet		$73,400 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	213/6200	380/1800	all	1670	128	5.2	–	6.8	**3.5** Finally, a good-looking small convertible, but can't escape the inherent compromises
RS3 Sportback	Jul 18	$80,240 (7dc)	I5/2.5T	294/7000	480/1700	all	1510	195	*4.01*	*12.18*	8.4	**4.0** New, lighter alloy five-pot only enhances the appeal of an excellent package
RS3 Sedan	May 17	$84,240 (7dc)	I5/2.5T	294/7000	480/1700	all	1515	194	4.1	–	8.4	**4.0** The perfect car if you need pace more than space
A4 2.0 TFSI quattro Sport	May 16	$69,900 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	185/6000	370/1600	all	1510	122	5.8	–	6.3	**3.5** Beautiful inside and surprisingly capable, but not a car to raise the heart rate
A4 Avant 2.0TFSI quattro	Aug 16	$72,900 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	185/6000	370/1600	all	1540	120	6.0	–	6.6	**3.5** Possibly the most sensible car in this whole section, but who wants to be sensible?
S4	Sep 17	$99,240 (8a)	V6/3.0T	260/6400	500/1370	all	1630	159	*4.95*	*13.12*	*11.02*	**4.0** A surprise package – subtle looks, cracking engine and (with the sports diff) engaging handling
S4 Avant	Apr 17	$102,240 (8a)	V6/3.0T	260/6400	500/1370	all	1675	155	4.9	–	7.8	**4.0** Arguably even more appealing than the sedan and makes a mockery of the fast SUV craze
RS4 Avant	Feb 19	$152,529 (8a)	V6/2.9TT	331/6700	600/1700	all	1790	185	*3.87*	*12.02*	8.9	**4.0** Buff yet practical body, sledgehammer pace with a ride subtlety missing from the C63 S Estate
A5 2.0 TFSI Coupe		$81,500 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	185/6000	370/1600	all	1500	123	5.8	–	6.5	**3.5** Crisp looks and deceptively quick, but expensive when the A4 does the same thing (with less style)
A5 2.0 TFSI Sportback		$81,500 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	185/6000	370/1600	all	1535	121	6.0	–	6.5	**3.5** More versatile and better looking than A4 sedan – more expensive and cramped than A4 Avant
A5 2.0 TFSI Cabriolet		$95,000 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	185/6000	370/1600	all	1710	108	6.3	–	6.7	**3.5** Big price and weight hike over Coupe but cures most of the previous car's ills
S5 Coupe	May 17	$105,140 (8a)	V6/3.0T	260/6400	500/1370	all	1615	161	4.7	–	7.5	**4.0** Creamy new turbo V6 blends luxury and dynamics; optional Sport diff a must-have
S5 Sportback	July 17	$105,140 (8a)	V6/3.0T	260/6400	500/1370	all	1660	157	4.7	–	7.5	**4.0** Coupe with back doors and space for three in the rear… or you could just buy a roomier S4 Avant
S5 Cabriolet	Dec 17	$118,740 (8a)	V6/3.0T	260/6400	500/1370	all	1840	141	5.1	–	7.9	**3.5** Stronger, swifter than old S5 Cabriolet with not much to moan about apart from weight increase
RS5	Oct 18	$157,700 (8a)	V6/2.9TT	331/6700	600/1700	all	1730	191	*3.96*	*12.04*	8.8	**4.0** If you can get over the lack of atmo V8 (which is tough to do…) you'll find a more rounded, capable car
RS5 Sportback		$157,700 (8a)	V6/2.9TT	331/6700	600/1700	all	1840	180	3.9	–	–	**4.0** Same coupe, but with extra (pillarless) doors. We'd still have an RS4 Avant, though
A6 3.0 TDI Biturbo		$124,855 (8a)	V6/3.0TTD	235/3900	650/1400	all	1835	123	5.0	–	6.1	**3.5** Incredible power and torque make this A6 haul despite the diesel still lacking performance cred
S6	Jun 15	$171,740 (7dc)	V8/4.0TT	331/6400	550/1400	all	1895	175	4.4	–	9.4	**3.5** If you don't care about on-limit thrills this is insanely quick and a great ownership proposition
RS6 Performance	Jul 16	$248,355 (8a)	V8/4.0TT	445/6800	(750)/1750	all	1950	228	3.7	–	9.7	**4.0** A beast, with supercar-killing speed and room for kids, shopping and the dog
A7 Sportback 55 TFSI		$131,900 (7dc)	V6/3.0T	250/6400	500/1370	all	1890	132	5.2	–	7.1	**4.0** Superb new engine and technology both poached from new-gen A8 … for $64K less
A8 55 TFSI		$195,000 (8a)	V6/3.0T	250/6400	500/1370	all	1995	125	5.6	–	8.2	**4.0** Faster and almost as efficient as old-gen diesel V8. New chassis sparkles, but feels remote
A8 L 55 TFSI		$210,000 (8a)	V6/3.0T	250/6400	500/1370	all	2315	108	5.7	–	8.2	**4.0** An A8 with even more legroom and (optional) rear-seat foot massage. We're serious…
TT 2.0 TFSI Sport	May 15	$74,700 (6m) $78,155 (6dc)	I4/2.0T	169/6200	370/1600	front	1230	137	6.0	–	5.9	**4.0** Don't discount the front-driver as it's light with a super-sweet chassis and manual option!
TT 2.0 TFSI Sport Quattro	Nov 15	$81,155 (6dc)	I4/2.0T	169/6200	370/1600	all	1335	127	*5.32*	*13.64*	6.4	**4.0** Extra 100kg can dampen chassis enthusiasm and ride is much better than the TT S
TT 2.0 TFSI Roadster	Sep 15	$84,655 (6dc)	I4/2.0T	169/6200	370/1600	all	1410	120	5.6	–	6.4	**3.5** Loses its roof, but retains that crucial sportscar feel. It's less potent than rivals and quattro only
TT S	Sep 16	$101,855 (6dc)	I4/2.0T	210/6200	380/1800	all	1385	152	*4.67*	*12.95*	6.8	**3.5** Extremely quick, great interior and involving handling ruined by spine-crushing ride
TT S Roadster	Jan 16	$105,001 (6dc)	I4/2.0T	210/6200	380/1800	all	1470	143	5.0	–	6.9	**3.5** Same ride issues as Coupe in a heavier package and it's base Boxster money
TT RS	Feb 18	$137,240 (7dc)	I5/2.5T	294/5850	480/1700	all	1440	204	*3.59*	*11.75*	8.4	**4.0** Difficult to go quicker for less; supercar-slaying acceleration and on-road pace
TT RS Roadster		$141,240 (7dc)	I5/2.5T	294/5850	480/1700	all	1530	192	3.9	–	8.6	**4.0** Hardly slow with good body rigidity. It takes a step back for purists, but maybe that's not the point?
R8 V10 RWS	Feb 19	$299,129 (7dc)	V10/5.2	397/7800	540/6500	rear	1590	250	*3.57*	*11.36*	12.4	**4.5** Fast Audis have always had quattro, until now. Hooray! Rarer and $90K cheaper than Huracan LP580-2
R8 V10 RWS Spyder		$320,629 (7dc)	V10/5.2	397/7800	540/6500	rear	1680	236	3.8	–	12.6	**4.0** As above, with slightly less pace but much more wind in your hair
R8 V10	Oct 15	$366,340 (7dc)	V10/5.2	397/8250	540/6500	all	1670	238	3.5	–	11.4	**4.5** One of the cheapest tickets to supercar town and better road car than the Plus
R8 V10 Spyder	Apr 18	$387,840 (7dc)	V10/5.2	397/8250	540/6500	all	1720	231	3.6	–	11.7	**4.5** Heavier, slower and it doesn't matter as noise is epic and handling brilliantly adjustable
R8 V10 Plus	Feb 17	$402,340 (7dc)	V10/5.2	449/8250	560/6500	all	1630	275	*3.18*	*10.93*	12.3	**4.0** Insane speed, eye-catching looks and outrageous grip spoiled by silly seats and brutal ride
RS Q3 Performance		$84,850 (7dc)	I5/2.5T	270/6700	465/1625	all	1655	151	4.8	–	8.6	**3.5** A surprising amount of fun but struggles with the power; SQ5 the much smarter buy
SQ5 TFSI	Sep 17	$99,240 (8a)	V6/3.0T	260/6400	500/1370	all	1870	139	5.4	–	8.7	**4.0** Polished family hauler that's surprisingly adept though lacks the old diesel's character
Q8 55 TFSI		$128,900 (8a)	V6/3.0T	250/5500	500/2900	all	2265	111	5.9	–	9.2	**4.0** Not as quick as SQ7, but petrol-turbo V6 is sweeter; five-seat cabin is as slick as exterior design
SQ7 TDI	Feb 17	$155,140 (8a)	V8/4.0TTD	320/5000	900/1000	all	2270	141	4.8	–	7.6	**4.0** High-tech seven-seater every bit as good as the Bentayga for half the price

Bentley www.bentleymotors.com

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
Continental GT	Feb 18	$422,600 (8dc)	W12/6.0TT	467/6000	900/1350	all	2244	208	3.7	–	12.2	**4.0** After 15 years it's finally an all-new coupe, now with proper pace and physics-defying dynamics
Flying Spur V8		$378,197 (8a)	V8/4.0TT	373/6000	660/2000	all	2342	159	5.2	–	10.9	**3.5** British alternative to an S63 AMG feeling its age and not long for this world
Flying Spur W12	Dec 13	$423,160 (8a)	W12/6.0TT	460/6000	800/2000	all	2400	192	4.6	–	14.7	**3.5** Huge pace and comfortable ride, although it can't hide from its heft or heavy low-speed steering
Mulsanne		$662,858 (8a)	V8/6.75TT	377/4200	1020/1750	rear	2610	150	5.3	–	16.9	**3.0** Opulent old-school Bentley is surprisingly dynamic, yet it is fearsomely expensive and thirsty
Mulsanne Speed		$733,387 (8a)	V8/6.75TT	395/4200	1100/1750	rear	2610	151	4.8	–	14.6	**3.0** The torquiest car on sale in Oz; for those to whom money is no object
Bentayga V8		$334,700 (8a)	V8/4.0TT	404/6000	770/1960	all	2395	169	4.5	–	11.4	**4.0** Sweet V8 soundtrack makes the 'entry-level' Bentayga arguably the most appealing
Bentayga V8 Diesel		$335,000 (8a)	V8/4.0TTD	320/5000	900/1000	all	2499	128	4.8	–	8.0	**4.0** Bentley buyers don't shop in Audi showrooms, but the SQ7 is the better choice
Bentayga W12	Nov 16	$423,600 (8a)	W12/6.0TT	447/6000	900/1350	all	2440	183	4.1	–	13.1	**4.0** For those who have to have the ultimate there's no other SUV choice

BMW www.bmw.com.au

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
125i	Nov 17	$49,990 (6m/8a)	I4/2.0T	165/5000	310/1350	rear	1345	123	6.1	–	5.9	**3.0** Specs promises a rear-drive Golf GTI, but doesn't quite hit the mark – adaptive dampers help
M140i	Sep 17	$59,990 (6m/8a)	I6/3.0T	250/5500	500/1520	rear	1445	162	*4.65**	*12.76**	7.1	**4.0** With the optional LSD fitted an all-time hot hatch great for $65K
230i		$63,000 (6m/8a)	I4/2.0T	185/6500	350/1250	rear	1385	134	5.6	–	5.9	**3.5** Proof that BMW still knows how to do a super-sweet rear-drive sports coupe
230i Convertible		$73,000 (6m/8a)	I4/2.0T	185/6000	350/1250	rear	1555	119	5.9	–	6.2	**3.5** Removable roof doesn't improve the experience as much as the $10K premium suggests it should
M240i	Ann 16	$77,629 (6m/8a)	I6/3.0T	250/6000	500/1300	rear	1455	172	4.6	–	7.1	**4.0** Great car but you'll have to really want that coupe bodyshell to pay $17K more than a M140i
M240i Convertible		$86,829 (6m/8a)	I6/3.0T	250/6000	500/1300	rear	1620	154	4.7	–	7.4	**3.5** Engine makes light work of the extra heft for a not inconsiderable sum
M2 Competition Pure		$99,900 (6m/7dc)	I6/3.0TT	302/7000	550/2350	rear	1550	195	4.2	–	–	**4.5** M3 power in raw and compact sub-$100K M2 package is an equation we like. A lot
M2 Competition	Feb 19	$104,900 (6m/7dc)	I6/3.0TT	302/7000	550/2350	rear	1550	195	*4.5**	*12.52**	–	**4.5** Even with more kit, M2 Competition is still nearly $27K cheaper than an M3 Pure…
330i		$69,900 (6m/8a)	I4/2.0T	185/5200	350/1450	rear	1470	126	5.9	–	5.7	**4.0** If you had to recommend a car to suit absolutely everyone this would be high on the list
330i Touring		$73,900 (6m/8a)	I4/2.0T	185/5200	350/1450	rear	1540	120	6.0	–	6.1	**4.0** The above with added practicality and style (and weight)
340i	Jun 17	$89,900 (6m/8a)	I6/3.0T	240/5500	450/1380	rear	1510	158	*5.51**	*13.57**	*11.2**	**4.0** Needs a diff and forget the active steering, otherwise ticks a lot of boxes
M3 Pure	Jan 18	$129,529 (6m/7dc)	I6/3.0TT	331/7300	550/1800	rear	1520	218	4.2	–	8.8	**4.5** An incredible amount of car for the money; keep the 19s and Continental tyres for the best experience

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
M3 Competition	Sep 17	$146,529 (6m/7dc)	I6/3.0TT	331/7300	550/1800	rear	1520	218	4.16	12.15	8.8	4.5 Incredible performance but standard brakes weak, 20s hurt the ride and can be a handful
M3 CS	Jul 18	$179,900 (7dc)	I6/3.0TT	338/6250	600/4000	rear	1585	213	3.9	–	8.5	4.5 Could be the M3/M4 sweet spot thanks to superb CS revisions, tough looks
430i		$81,000 (6m/8a)	I4/2.0T	185/6500	350/1250	rear	1470	126	5.9	–	5.8	3.5 Frugal, nicely balanced fun that struggles to set your pulse alight
430i Cabrio		$99,300 (6m/8a)	I4/2.0T	185/6500	350/1250	rear	1680	110	6.4	–	6.3	3.5 Capable and enjoyable drop-top likely to find favour with real estate agents
440i	Jan 18	$101,300 (6m/8a)	I6/3.0T	240/6000	450/1200	rear	1525	157	5.14*	13.27*	10.4*	4.0 Incredibly accomplished coupe but has become a little bit characterless – needs more engine note
440i Gran Coupe	Sep 16	$101,300 (6m/8a)	I6/3.0T	240/6000	450/1200	rear	1585	151	5.1*	–	6.8	4.0 The ultimate niche filler turns out to be the best of both worlds. A fine car
440i Convertible		$118,929 (6m/8a)	I6/3.0T	240/6000	450/1200	rear	1740	138	5.4*	–	7.2	3.5 Arguably more fit for purpose than M4 drop-top. No roof upsets balance between power/handling
M4 Pure		$139,529 (6m/7dc)	I6/3.0TT	331/7300	550/1800	rear	1497	221	4.2	–	8.8	4.5 Good value compared to C63 Coupe and much more potent than RC F
M4 Competition	Ann 16	$156,529 (6m/7dc)	I6/3.0TT	331/7300	550/1800	rear	1497	221	4.2	–	8.8	4.5 Doesn't have the visual menace of the M3 but surprisingly practical as well as insanely fast
M4 Convertible Competition		$168,200 (6m/7dc)	I6/3.0TT	331/7300	550/1800	rear	1753	189	–	–	9.1	3.5 Outrageous twin-turbo torque helps take your mind off the body flex
M4 CS	Oct 18	$189,529 (7dc)	I6/3.0TT	338/6250	600/4000	rear	1580	214	4.05	12.01	8.4	4.5 Price cut for the most talented M4 yet makes the base model interior easier to forgive
540i	May 17	$139,619 (8a)	I6/3.0T	250/6500	450/1380	rear	1595	157	5.1	–	6.7	3.5 Extremely capable but feels to be trying to keep the driver at an arm's length. Big price hike
M5 Competition	Feb 19	$229,900 (8a)	V8/4.4TT	460/6000	750/1800	all	1865	247	3.78	11.53	10.8	4.5 Less weight would have been preferable to more power, but 3.3sec 0-100km/h is silly fast
640i GT xDrive		$148,529 (8a)	I6/3.0T	250/6500	450/1380	all	1835	136	5.3	–	8.5	3.5 Much better looking than 5 Series GT and loaded with kit. Does it need xDrive over 540i?
640i Gran Coupe		$192,529 (8a)	I6/3.0T	235/6000	450/1300	rear	1750	134	5.4	–	6.2	3.5 Looks so much classier than a 5 Series – a design you'll pay a $50K premium for
640i Convertible	Aug 11	$201,529 (8a)	I6/3.0T	235/6000	450/1300	rear	1840	128	5.5	–	7.9	3.5 Stylish land yacht with a smooth drivetrain. Engine struggles with weight; compromised ride on 20s
650i Gran Coupe	Feb 13	$247,529 (8a)	V8/4.4TT	330/5500	650/2000	rear	1865	177	4.6	–	8.9	3.5 At $40K more than an M5 this makes zero sense – wait for the 8 Series Gran Coupe
650i Convertible		$251,839 (8a)	V8/4.4TT	330/5500	650/2000	rear	1940	170	4.6	–	10.7	3.5 Looks great top up or down. Still, it doesn't handle like a 911 and it isn't as sexy as an Aston
M6 Gran Coupe	Jan 14	$309,529 (7dc)	V8/4.4TT	412/7000	680/1500	rear	1875	200	4.71	12.52	17.1	3.0 Stunning styling (in the right colour) but built for autobahns not backroads
M6 Convertible		$312,639 (7dc)	V8/4.4TT	412/7000	680/1500	rear	1980	208	4.3	–	10.3	2.5 Too heavy, too remote and too wobbly albeit with toupee-tearing acceleration
740i	May 16	$198,900 (8a)	I6/3.0T	240/5500	450/1380	rear	1725	139	5.5	–	7.0	4.0 Has all the bells and whistles yet somehow lacks the luxury vibe of the S-Class
750i		$269,900 (8a)	V8/4.4TT	330/5500	650/1800	rear	1820	181	4.7	–	7.9	4.0 High-tech and usefully lighter than predecessor with a mega engine
750Li		$294,900 (8a)	V8/4.4TT	330/5500	650/1800	rear	1865	177	4.7	–	8.0	4.0 With plenty of room in the back, it's a limo for those who want to be driven, not drive
M760Li xDrive	Nov 17	$374,900 (8a)	V12/6.6TT	441/5500	800/1500	all	2180	202	3.9	–	12.6	3.5 Top-dog limousine heroically fast and surprisingly dynamic, but what's the point?
i8	Feb 16	$318,900 (6a)	I3/1.5T(E)	275/5800	570/3700	all	1535	179	4.4	–	2.2	4.0 The best-driving BMW is only a more inspiring petrol engine away from being entirely brilliant
i8 Roadster		$348,900 (6a)	I3/1.5T(E)	275/5800	570/3700	all	1595	172	4.6	–	2.4	4.0 Carbon-fibre chassis gives i8 Roadster the strength to drive just like the i8 Coupe
X2 M35i		$68,900 (8a)	I4/2.0T	225/6250	450/1750	all	1610	140	4.9	–	7.4	3.5 Brave new world for compact BMWs as Mini-based all-paw small SUV gets 'M' treatment
X3 M40i		$99,529 (8a)	I6/3.0T	265/6500	500/1520	all	1810	146	4.8	–	8.9	4.0 Superb performance takes it right to Mercedes-AMG GLC43 (if not GLC63)
X4 M40i	Jan 19	$109,900 (8a)	I6/3.0T	265/6500	500/1550	all	1825	145	4.8	–	9.0	4.0 Hefty $10K premium for an X3 M40i with a slanted roof. Wouldn't you prefer an Audi S4 Avant?
X5 M50d		$149,900 (8a)	I6/3.0QTD	294/4400	760/2000	all	2275	129	5.2	–	7.5	3.5 Now a quad-turbo-diesel with startling economy, but that kerb weight affects performance
x6 xDrive50i	May 15	$153,619 (8a)	V8/4.4TT	330/6000	(700)/2000	all	2170	152	4.8	–	9.7	3.0 Less practical, more expensive and no quicker than an X5, though it does sound mega
X6 M50d		$162,200 (8a)	I6/3.0 TTTD	280/4400	740/2000	all	2185	128	5.2	–	6.6	3.0 We're at a loss to explain why the X6 is so popular, but the triple-turbo diesel is a monster
X6 M	Aug 15	$197,629 (8a)	V8/4.4TT	423/6500	750/2200	all	2265	186	4.2	–	11.1	4.0 Frighteningly fast and capable of defying the laws of physics...for a while, anyway

Caterham www.caterhamcars.com.au

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
Seven 275	Sep 17	$64,000 (5m)	I4/1.6	100/6100	160/4100	rear	590	170	6.53	14.8	6.2	3.0 Entry-level Caterham is great fun to steer. It's an emotional purchase for the cash – there's quicker
Seven 275 S		$69,900 (5m)	I4/1.6	100/6100	160/4100	rear	590	170	-	–	-	3.0 Just like the 275, but with leather, painted body and more grip. Still no standard limited-slip diff
Seven 355		$76,600 (5m)	I4/2.0	127/7300	177/6000	rear	560	227	5.0	–	-	3.0 The Caterham for those who want more grunt, but it's lacking a lot of equipment
Seven 355 R		$94,800 (5m)	I4/2.0	127/7300	177/6000	rear	560	227	5.0	–	-	3.0 This on a track – driving doesn't come much better. Although you'll probably want to tow it there
Seven 485 S		$103,700 (6m)	I4/2.0	177/8500	206/6300	rear	675	262	3.9	–	-	3.5 The proper, full-fruit, no-electronics Caterham experience. Just be prepared to pay for it
Seven 485 R		$114,900 (6m)	I4/2.0	177/8500	206/6300	rear	675	262	3.9	–	-	4.0 A truly special driving experience, but it's 718 Boxster money for a car without a proper roof...

Chevrolet www.chevrolet.com.au

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
Camaro 2SS	Feb 19	$85,990 (8a)	V8/6.2	339/6000	617/4400	rear	1710	198	4.68	12.72	11.6	4.0 A proper rear-drive V8 with an LSD for under $100K. Feels solidly built. Needs adaptive damping next

Chrysler www.chrysler.com.au

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
300 SRT Core	Sep 16	$65,000 (8a)	V8/6.4	350/6150	637/4250	rear	1946	180	4.68	12.76	13.0	4.0 Incredible pace for the money. It could use adaptive dampers and the interior feels a little cheap
300 SRT	Jan 16	$75,000 (8a)	V8/6.4	350/6150	637/4250	rear	1965	178	–	–	–	4.0 Great value, rides well and sounds mint... just remember it's no ballerina in the bends and it's thirsty

Ferrari www.ferrari.com.au

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
Portofino		$398,888 (7dc)	V8/3.9TT	441/7500	760/3000	rear	1664	265	3.5	–	–	3.5 Fitter and faster than California T without capturing the magic of Ferrari's more established models
488 GTB	Feb 17	$469,988 (7dc)	V8/3.9TT	492/8000	760/3000	rear	1475	334	3.3	11.0	11.4	5.0 A stunning achievement with performance to burn and truly involving dynamics
488 Spider	Dec 16	$526,888 (7dc)	V8/3.9TT	492/8000	760/3000	rear	1525	323	3.0	–	11.4	5.0 All the driving experience with even more involvement... it's just not as stiff as the coupe
488 Pista	Dec 18	$645,000DA (7dc)	V8/3.9TT	530/8000	770/3000	rear	1385	383	2.85	–	–	5.0 Mind-altering performance with an even sharper focus, though it comes at an almighty price
GTC4 Lusso T	May 17	$503,888 (7dc)	V8/3.9TT	449/7500	760/3000	rear	1840	244	3.5	–	11.6	4.5 Rear-drive family Ferrari adds fun factor at the expense of V12 soundtrack
GTC4 Lusso	Oct 16	$578,888 (7dc)	V12/6.3	507/8000	697/6000	all	1920	264	3.4	–	15.4	4.5 Prettier and more powerful than FF predecessor, which comes with a scary price tag and fuel use
812 Superfast	Oct 18	$610,000 (7dc)	V12/6.5	588/8500	718/7000	rear	1630	357	2.9	–	14.9	5.0 F12 successor wraps possibly world's greatest engine in a prettier body for less money

Ford www.ford.com.au

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
Focus ST-Line		$28,990 (8a)	I3/1.5T	134/6000	240/1600	front	1369	98	8.3	–	5.5	3.5 Focus makes an attempt at reclaiming warm-hatch royalty ... but with three pots and no manual
Focus RS Limited Edition	Jul 18	$56,990 (6m)	I4/2.0T	257/6000	(470)/2000	all	1575	163	5.0	13.34	8.1	4.5 Hot hatch royalty. Get in quick before the final 500 LEs sell out
Mustang EcoBoost		$49,990 (6m) $52,990 (10a)	I4/2.3T	224/5700	441/3000	rear	1705	131	–	–	8.5	3.5 Don't sneer, the four-pot Mustang is a great steer, but a Mustang without a V8 just isn't quite right
Mustang EcoBoost Convertible		$59,490 (10a)	I4/2.3T	224/5700	441/3000	rear	1765	127	–	–	9.5	3.5 Great value for a head-turning convertible, just don't call it a muscle car
Mustang GT	Feb 19	$62,990 (6m) $66,259 (10a)	V8/5.0	339/7000	556/4600	rear	1732	196	4.53*	12.49*	13.0	4.0 With hugely improved steering/suspension, it's what 'Stang should have been from the start
Mustang GT Convertible		$74,709 (10a)	V8/5.0	339/7000	556/4600	rear	1802	188	–	–	12.7	3.5 Cops the power and torque hike, but even more of a price rise. Go the GT coupe...
Mustang Bullitt		$73,688 (6m)	V8/5.0	345/7000	556/4600	rear	1770	195	–	–	12.5	4.0 McQueen of the Mustang crop ups power and looks good, but it asks a pretty penny...

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
Holden www.holden.com.au												
Astra RS	Aug 17	$26,240 (6m) $27,240 (6a)	I4/1.6T	147/5500	(300)/1650	front	1325	111	*7.37*	*15.29*	5.8	**3.5** Muscular performance and capable dynamics for the price. Not super sporty, despite the RS badge
Commodore RS		$40,790 (9a)	V6/3.6	235/6800	381/5200	all	1672	141	–	–	–	**4.0** Base V6 Commodore is the lightest and therefore quickest. It makes a fine SV6 replacement
Commodore RS-V		$46,990 (9a)	V6/3.6	235/6800	381/5200	all	1672	141	–	–	–	**4.0** Extra kit makes RS-V the sweet spot of the ZB Commodore range
Commodore RS-V Sportwagon		$49,190 (9a)	V6/3.6	235/6800	381/5200	all	1737	135	–	–	–	**4.0** Stylish family hauler is an impressive package despite the high $49K entry point
Calais-V		$51,990 (9a)	V6/3.6	235/6800	381/5200	all	–	–	–	–	–	**3.5** Cheaper and better equipped than a Stinger GT, but then it's nowhere near as quick
Commodore VXR	Mar 18	$55,990 (9a)	V6/3.6	235/6800	381/5200	all	1737	138	–	–	–	**3.5** Has everything it needs except a proper engine. More performance expected at this price point
Honda www.honda.com.au												
Civic Type R	Oct 18	$51,990 (6m)	I4/2.0T	228/6500	400/2500	front	1380	165	*5.68*	*13.66*	7.7	**4.5** Get past the challenging looks and you'll experience possibly the best front-driver there's ever been
NSX	Sep 18	$420,000 (9dc)	V6/3.5TT	427	645	all	1698	251	–	–	9.7	**4.5** Amazing speed and technology but fighting in a fiercely competitive supercar segment
Hyundai www.hyundai.com.au												
i30 N Line		$26,490 (6m) $29,490 (7dc)	I4/1.6T	150/6000	265/1500	front	1315	114	–	–	7.5	**3.5** Manual SR is now N Line, but is still a terrific warm hatch with a punchy engine, good dynamics
i30 SR Premium		$34,490 (7dc)	I4/1.6T	150/6000	265/1500	front	1344	112	7.7	–	7.5	**3.5** Leather-trimmed range-topper loses its value equation and lacks a manual option
i30 N	Feb 19	$39,990 (6m)	I4/2.0T	202/6000	378/1750	front	1429	141	*6.24*	*14.26*	8.0	**4.5** Finessed, flavoursome, but not wickedly fast. A sweet blend of virtues for the price
Elantra SR Turbo	Jan 17	$28,990 (6m) $31,290 (7dc)	I4/1.6T	150/6000	265/1500	front	1360	110	7.7	–	–	**3.5** Polished chassis, useable grunt and decent value, however it's not a true performance car
Infiniti www.inifiticars.com.au												
Q50 Pure		$58,900 (7a)	V6/3.0TT	224/6400	400/5200	rear	1784	126	–	–	9.2	**3.0** 400Nm twin-turbo V6 is a clear de-tune of a great engine, but it's now priced like Stinger GT
Q50 Sport		$64,900 (7a)	V6/3.0TT	224/6400	400/5200	rear	1784	126	–	–	9.2	**3.0** Now loaded with all the gear, but Q50 should get the Red Sport tune at this price point
Q50 Red Sport		$74,900 (7a)	V6/3.0TT	298/6400	475/5200	rear	1784	167	*4.89*	*13.0*	9.3	**3.0** Price cut only highlights the level of mumbo for the money, but it needs a chassis to harness it
Q60 Red Sport	Jul 17	$84,900 (7a)	V6/3.0TT	298/6400	475/5200	rear	1784	167	–	–	8.9	**3.5** Sexier than the sedan with fun dynamics in certain conditions, but it's costly and cramped
Q70 GT		$68,900 (7a)	V6/3.7	235/7000	360/5200	rear	1702	138	6.2	–	10.2	**2.5** A value proposition with unique styling tied to a chassis that feels old and dynamically unresolved
Q70 Hybrid Premium	Aug 12	$82,900 (7a)	V6/3.5E	268/6800	520/5000	rear	1785	150	5.5	–	6.9	**2.5** Strong petrol-electric performance and economy let down by steering that feels artificial
QX70 S Premium		$104,400 (7a)	V8/5.0	297/6500	500/4400	all	1992	149	5.8	–	13.1	**3.0** Cracking V8 means this SUV shifts, but it likes a drink and the styling is love or hate
Jaguar www.jaguar.com.au												
XE 30t R-Sport		$71,700 (8a)	I4/2.0T	221/5500	400/1500	rear	1565	141	5.7	–	7.5	**3.5** Scores 221kW four-pot with lovely steering and ride quality, but it's not as fast as the figures suggest
XE S		$92,700 (8a)	V6/3.0S	280/6500	450/4500	rear	1665	150	5.0	–	8.1	**3.5** Snarling V6 gains a power increase with a price cut, although it isn't as dynamically sharp as its rivals

CHART ATTACK YEAR IN REVIEW: 2018 PERFORMANCE CAR SALES

FORD BEATS HOLDEN

Blue Oval eclipses Red Lion in landmark event

FOR THE first time since 1997 (21 years), Ford outsold Holden in a calendar year in Australia, 69,081 units versus 60,751 for 2018.

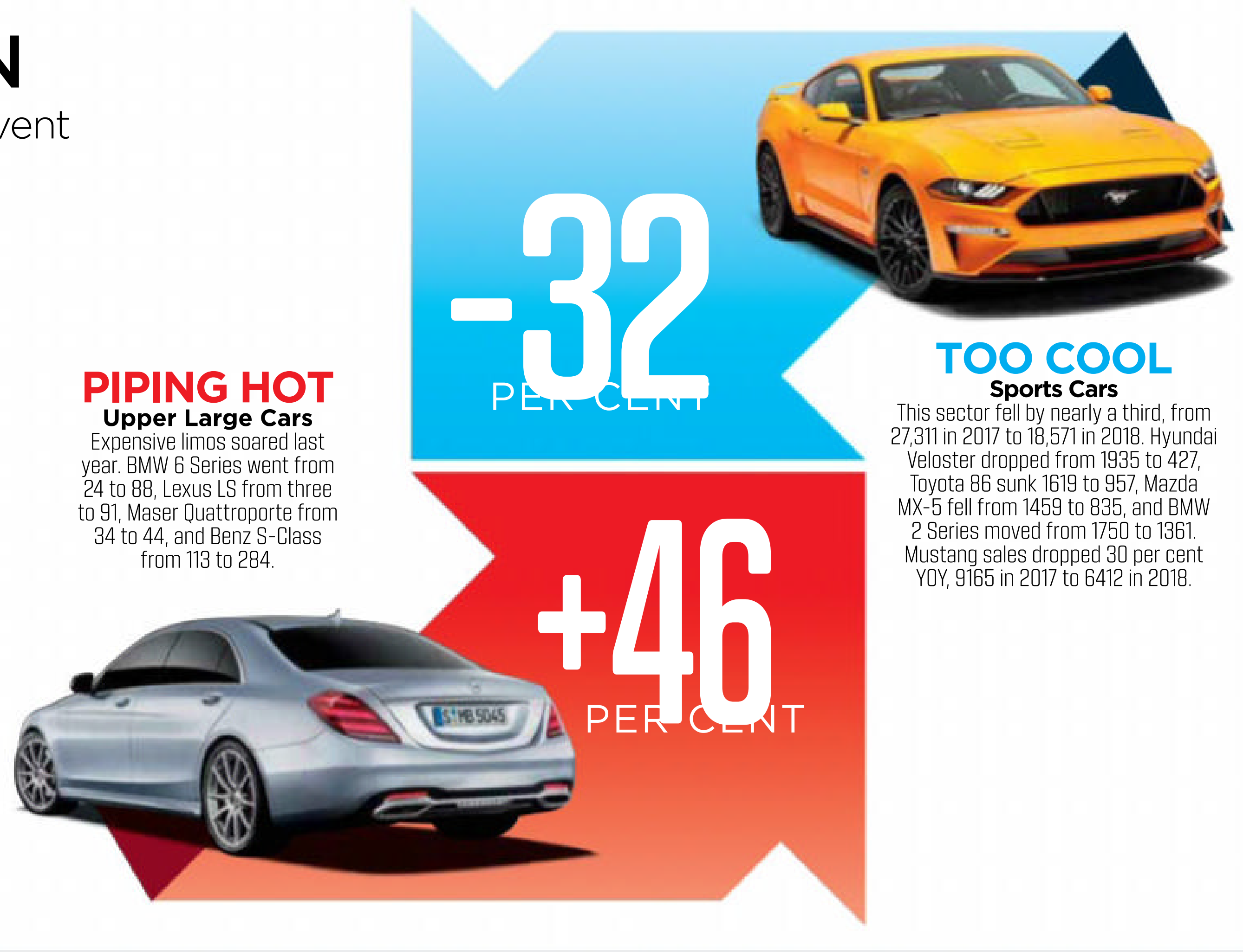
However, before the champagne corks bust in Bathurst and beyond, note that both fell significantly compared with 2017 and each trailed key competitors. Ford's aforementioned tally represented a drop of 12 per cent year-on-year, though that was nothing against Holden's 2018 haul that plummeted 33 per cent in the same period.

The Blue Oval couldn't blame the loss of Falcon, though, given it only sold 210 of the big rear-drivers in 2017 and finally shifted the last six in 2018, while the loss of 1764 Territorys tallied in 2017 was at least partially compensated by 875 extra Everests in 2018. Yet Focus, Mondeo and Mustang were all down by about a third. The latter fell from 9165 to 6412 sales, all within a year.

The Lion brand could squarely fault the loss of local production, by contrast. While some 23,676 VFII Commodores shifted in 2017, the combined ZB and VFII-runout tally stopped at 9040 in 2018, a 62 per cent freefall.

It also entirely lost 3899 utes and 513 Caprices of 2017, sans replacement. The one saving grace is the 4999 Equinox medium SUV sales that beat 4764 Ford Escapes. The question now is, will both brands recover in 2019 or will the fall continue? We reckon GM, in particular, may well be running out of patience.

Meanwhile in other news for the Aussie new car market, the SUV has extended its lead over the passenger car as Australia's vehicle of choice. In 2017, SUVs outsold passenger cars for the first time, by 15,000 units. In 2018, that gap extended to 116,887 sales. In fact, SUV sales soared 6.4 per cent in a market down 3.0 per cent overall, with passenger car sales slowing by 16 per cent. – *Daniel DeGasperi*



PIPING HOT
Upper Large Cars
Expensive limos soared last year. BMW 6 Series went from 24 to 88, Lexus LS from three to 91, Maser Quattroporte from 34 to 44, and Benz S-Class from 113 to 284.

TOO COOL
Sports Cars
This sector fell by nearly a third, from 27,311 in 2017 to 18,571 in 2018. Hyundai Veloster dropped from 1935 to 427, Toyota 86 sunk 1619 to 957, Mazda MX-5 fell from 1459 to 835, and BMW 2 Series moved from 1750 to 1361. Mustang sales dropped 30 per cent YOY, 9165 in 2017 to 6412 in 2018.

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
XF 35t S	Apr 16	$129,065 (8a)	V6/3.0S	280/6500	450/4500	rear	1710	164	5.3	–	8.3	**3.5** F-Type S engine tune and sharper styling. Look to the smaller, lighter XE for a more sporting steer
XF 30d S	Apr 16	$120,700 (8a)	V6/3.0TD	221/4000	700/2000	rear	1750	126	6.2	–	5.5	**3.5** Massive torque makes it brisk in the real world but prefers life at a more relaxed pace
XF 30d S Sportbrake		$123,450 (8a)	V6/3.0TD	221/4000	700/2000	rear	1855	119	6.6	–	5.9	**3.5** Drive one of these before you buy that premium SUV – stunning looks
XJ Autobiography LWB		$307,483 (8a)	V8/5.0S	375/6500	625/2500	rear	1880	199	4.9	–	11.6	**3.5** The barge from Blighty astounds with its ability. Well, anywhere that's not a car park. Ride is firm
XJR 575	Ann 18	$306,475 (8a)	V8/5.0S	423/6250	700/3500	rear	1875	226	4.4	–	11.1	**4.0** Ageing star that nevertheless is utterly charming thanks to ballistic blown V8
F-Type 2.0 Coupe	May 18	$107,012 (8a)	I4/2.0T	221/5500	400/1500	rear	1525	145	5.7	–	7.2	**3.5** New four-pot sheds weight and sounds a lot better than you'd expect, but the options list is a minefield
F-Type V6 Coupe		$121,212 (6m) $126,212 (8a)	V6/3.0S	250/6500	450/3500	rear	1577	159	5.3	–	8.4	**3.5** A sweet package if you're not keen on really hard driving – avoid the manual
F-Type V6 S Coupe		$148,712 (6m) $153,712 (8a)	V6/3.0S	280/6500	460/3500	rear	1594	176	4.9	–	8.6	**3.5** Extra grunt and LSD makes it a sharper package but more noise than actual pace
F-Type V6 S Coupe AWD		$169,512 (8a)	V6/3.0S	280/6500	460/3500	all	1674	167	5.1	–	8.9	**3.5** With these power outputs AWD really just makes the car slower and thirstier
F-Type V8 R Coupe	Feb 16	$246,012 (8a)	V8/5.0S	404/6500	680/2500	all	1730	234	*3.75*	*11.80*	11.3	**4.0** Brutally quick and a great drive with stunning looks and soundtrack to match. We miss the rear-driver
F-Type V8 SVR Coupe	Jun 17	$290,512 (8a)	V8/5.0S	423/6500	700/3500	all	1705	248	3.7	–	11.3	**4.0** Lighter and even quicker than V8 R but not subtle in any way, shape or form
F-Type 2.0		$125,712 (8a)	I4/2.0T	221/5500	400/1500	rear	1545	143	5.7	–	7.2	**3.5** Takes the fight to the new Boxster flat-four, but is four cylinders enough for this cool cat?
F-Type V6		$139,912 (6m) $144,912 (8a)	V6/3.0S	250/6500	450/3500	rear	1597	157	5.3	–	8.4	**3.5** Throaty V6 snarl perfect for four-pot snobs. Extra weight means it is only marginally faster
F-Type V6 S		$167,412 (6m) $172,412 (8a)	V6/3.0S	280/6500	460/3500	rear	1614	173	4.9	–	8.6	**3.5** The 0-100km/h time slides under 5.0sec and the eight-speed auto remains the pick over manual
F-Type V6 S AWD		$188,212 (8a)	V6/3.0S	280/6500	460/3500	all	1694	165	5.1	–	8.9	**4.0** All-weather F-Type doesn't overstress the chassis, but it's only six-tenths faster than the turbo four
F-Type V8 R AWD	Sep 15	$264,712 (8a)	V8/5.0S	404/6500	680/2500	all	1730	232	4.1	–	11.3	**4.0** So much cooler than a Porsche Carrera cabriolet, but $265K is a huge amount of cash
F-Type V8 SVR	Sep 16	$309,212 (8a)	V8/5.0S	423/6500	700/3500	all	1720	246	3.7	–	11.3	**4.0** First-row seats to the meanest-sounding V8 on sale – hold onto your toupees!
F-Pace 35t S	Jul 16	$107,823 (8a)	V6/3.0S	280/6500	450/4500	all	1861	151	5.5	–	8.9	**4.0** Drives well and looks good so it's a shame the F-Type snarl has been muted
F-Pace SVR		$140,020 (8a)	V8/5.0S	404/6500	680/2500	all	2070	195	4.3	–	11.9	**4.0** Superb V8 for not a lot more than XF Sportbrake, it's no wonder people buy SUVs
I-Pace		$119,900 (1a)	Dual EM	294	696	all	2133	138	4.8	–	–	**4.0** Sexier than a Tesla Model X, with price and performance to match an Audi S4 Avant

Jeep www.jeep.com.au

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
Grand Cherokee SRT8		$91,000 (8a)	V8/6.4	344/6250	624/4100	all	2289	150	4.9	–	14.0	**3.5** Stonking engine is finally mated to an eight-speed auto; not the bargain it once was, though
Grand Cherokee Trackhawk	Aug 18	$134,900 (8a)	V8/6.2S	522/6000	868/4800	all	2399	218	3.70	*11.80*	16.8	**4.0** Cheapest way to the 500kW club, though you'll spend the rest on fuel bills

Kia www.kia.com.au

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
Stinger 200 S		$46,990 (8a)	I4/2.0T	182/6200	353/1400	rear	1693	108	6.0	–	8.8	**3.0** Alluring entry price for Korean Falcon EcoBoost, but why wouldn't you extend to the twin-turbo V6?
Stinger 200 Si		$52,990 (8a)	I4/2.0T	182/6200	353/1400	rear	1693	108	6.0	–	8.8	**3.0** Four-cylinder still a brisk performer with great front-end agility, albeit with a jittery ride
Stinger GT-Line		$55,990 (8a)	I4/2.0T	182/6200	353/1400	rear	1693	108	6.0	–	8.8	**3.5** Four-pot pick thanks to adaptive suspension and premo cabin. Misses out on an LSD and Brembos
Stinger 330 S	Jul 18	$49,990 (8a)	V6/3.3TT	272/6000	510/1300	rear	1780	153	*5.07*	*13.26*	10.2	**3.5** Every V6 scores Brembos and LSD. The steering needs work and it isn't as polished as a VFII
Stinger 330 Si	Nov 17	$55,990 (8a)	V6/3.3TT	272/6000	510/1300	rear	1780	153	4.9	–	10.3	**3.5** Fantastic twin-turbo punch, but tail-happy chassis can make it a wild ride
Stinger GT	Feb 18	$59,990 (8a)	V6/3.3TT	272/6000	510/1300	rear	1780	153	*4.82*	*13.01*	10.4	**4.0** Adaptive suspension adds much-needed support to the chassis – pick of the Stinger bunch

KTM www.simplysportscars.com

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
X-Bow R	May 16	$169,990 (6m)	I4/2.0T	220/6400	420/3200	rear	790	279	3.9	–	8.7	**4.5** Literally face-peeling performance in a package that's not exactly a pragmatic choice
X-Bow GT		$189,990 (6m)	I4/2.0T	220/6400	420/3200	rear	847	260	4.1	–	8.7	**4.5** It adds a windscreen, but is still about as 'GT' as a turbocharged skateboard

PIPELINE HOT STUFF COMING SOON

H1 2019

Alpina XD3
Audi A1
Audi SQ2
Audi TT facelift
BMW 3 Series
All-new, topped by 500Nm M340i.
BMW Z4
BMW X3/X4 M
Ford Fiesta ST
Honda NSX facelift
Hyundai Genesis G70
Kia Cerato GT
Lamborghini Aventador SVJ
Mazda3 SP25
McLaren 600LT Spider
McLaren 720S Spider
Mercedes-AMG A35
Mercedes-AMG GT 4-Door
Porsche 718 Boxster/Cayman T
Range Rover Evoque
Range Rover SV Coupe
Volkswagen Golf GTI TCR

H2 2019

Audi E-Tron
Audi Q6
Audi RS Q8
Audi R8 facelift
Audi S6
Bentley Conti GT Convertible
BMW 8 Series
Hyundai i30 N Fastback
Lexus RC F Track Edition
Maserati Levante GTS
Mazda MX-5 30th Anniversary
McLaren Senna
Mercedes-AMG A45
Hot hatch nabs a Drift Mode.
Mercedes-AMG GT facelift
Porsche 718 Boxster Spyder
Porsche 718 Cayman GT4
Porsche 911 Speedster
Rolls-Royce Cullinan
Tesla Model 3
Toyota Supra

2020

Audi RS Q3
BMW M8
BMW 2 Series
Next M2 tagged 'drift machine'.
Ferrari Purosangue
Maranello gives in, builds SUV. Boo.
Ford Focus ST
McLaren BP23
Mini Cooper JCW GP
Porsche Taycan
Subaru BRZ
Subaru WRX
Toyota 86

Lamborghini www.lamborghini.com

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
Urus		$390,000 (8a)	V8/4.0TT	478/6000	850/2250	all	2200	217	3.6	12.8	12.7	**4.0** Modern-day LM002 guaranteed to frighten the other parents on the school fun
Huracan LP580-2	Jan 17	$390,000 (7dc)	V10/5.2	427/8000	540/6500	rear	1389	307	*3.55*	*11.25*	14.3	**4.5** More involving and playful than the LP610-4, but it still feels like it needs to be let off the leash
Huracan LP580-2 Spyder		$429,000 (7dc)	V10/5.2	427/8000	540/6500	rear	1509	283	3.6	–	14.5	**4.5** The cheapest way to let that soaring V10 soundtrack into the cabin
Huracan LP610-4	Oct 15	$428,000 (7dc)	V10/5.2	449/8250	560/6500	all	1422	316	3.2	–	14.5	**4.5** Incredible performance and dynamics and a much more complete than its Aventador big brother
Huracan LP610-4 Spyder	Sep 16	$471,000 (7dc)	V10/5.2	449/8250	560/6500	all	1542	291	3.4	–	14.6	**4.5** Ultimate extrovert's car with a fab noise. Ultimately it isn't the purist's choice given its heft
Huracan Performante		$483,866 (7dc)	V10/5.2	470/8000	600/6500	all	1382	340	2.9	–	13.7	**4.5** Hardcore Huracan matches Aventador's performance, but at this price you could have a 488 GTB
Huracan Performante Spyder		$532,635 (7dc)	V10/5.2	470/8000	600/6500	all	1507	312	3.1	–	13.7	**4.5** Performante says 'hardcore' but heavier Spyder barely quicker than Huracan LP610-4
Aventador S	May 17	$788,914 (7s)	V12/6.5	544/8400	690/5500	all	1575	346	2.9	–	16.9	**4.0** S brings worthwhile upgrades to agility, brakes and ride, but gearbox remains a bugbear
Aventador S Roadster		$825,530 (7s)	V12/6.5	544/8400	690/5500	all	1625	335	3.0	–	16.9	**4.0** Will make you feel a million bucks, which is just as well as that's basically what it costs
Aventador SVJ		$949,640 (7s)	V12/6.5	566/8500	720/6750	all	1525	371	2.8	–	–	**4.5** Hard to tame, but epic potency and amazing soundtrack worth the challenge (and then some)

Lexus www.lexus.com.au

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
IS350 F Sport	Dec 14	$73,251 (8a)	V6/3.5	233/6400	378/4800	rear	1685	138	*6.10*	*14.10*	9.7	**3.5** Great value, enjoyable dynamics and a responsive V6 is tied to an intrusive ESP and old engine tech
GS350 F Sport		$95,311 (6a)	V6/3.5	232/6400	380/4800	rear	1745	133	6.0	–	9.3	**3.0** Surprisingly capable chassis takes the Euros on. Hyper-responsive steering misses the mark
GS F	Feb 17	$152,980 (8a)	V8/5.0	351/7100	530/4800	rear	1825	192	*4.99*	*13.09*	11.3	**4.0** Has few direct rivals and unique character makes it easy to excuse its handful of flaws
LS500 F Sport	Aug 18	$190,129 (10a)	V6/3.5TT	310/6000	600/1600	rear	2240	138	5.0	–	9.5	**3.5** New turbo-torque king also drinks much less than LC's V8, but when will LC get it?
LS500h F Sport	Aug 18	$190,500 (4a)	V6/3.5E	264/6600	350/5100	rear	2280	116	5.4	–	6.6	**3.5** Prime efficiency, but a dreary power-to-weight ratio that barely matches a base RC
RC300 F Sport	Feb 16	$74,529 (8a)	I4/2.0T	180/5000	350/1650	rear	1620	111	7.0	–	7.5	**3.0** Turbo four-pot is frugal and more flexible than V6 despite lacking pace and the V6's chassis upgrades
RC350 F Sport	Jan 18	$77,529 (8a)	V6/3.5	233/6000	378/4800	rear	1680	139	*6.42*	*14.41*	*12.15*	**3.5** Good value and entertaining rear-drive coupe; added LSD adds much needed traction and agility
RC F	Mar 16	$137,729 (8a)	V8/5.0	351/7100	530/4800	rear	1860	189	*5.11*	*13.25*	10.9	**3.5** Far from perfect but a solid ownership proposition that's extremely good on track
LC500	Feb 18	$189,926 (10a)	V8/5.0	351/7100	540/4800	rear	1935	182	*5.18*	*13.23*	11.6	**4.0** Concept-car looks, atmo V8 and lovely steering is let down by the chassis, ESC, weight and firm ride
LC500h	Oct 17	$190,000 (4a)	V6/3.5E	264/6600	348/4900	rear	1985	134	5.0	–	6.7	**3.0** Near-half the V8's fuel usage, but it feels slower than it is and it's missing the NASCAR-like soundtrack

Lotus www.lotuscars.com.au

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
Elise Sport 220		$87,990 (6m)	I4/1.8S	162/6800	250/4600	rear	904	179	4.6	–	7.5	**3.5** A terrific drive made even better by supercharging. A car that's hard to get out of – literally
Elise Sprint 220	Dec 18	$97,990 (6m)	I4/1.8S	162/6800	250/4600	rear	878	185	4.5	–	7.5	**3.5** Strips a bit more weight off the Sport, for a sizeable extra charge
Elise Cup 250		$107,990 (6m)	I4/1.8S	181/7200	250/3500	rear	917	197	4.3	–	7.5	**3.5** Now faster and more affordable. More hardcore than a Cayman for similar coin
Exige Sport 350 Coupe		$139,500 (6m)	V6/3.5S	258/7000	400/4500	rear	1125	229	3.9	–	10.1	**4.0** Cheapest ticket to supercar power-to-weight ratios. Just don't expect it to be a daily driver
Exige Sport 350 Roadster		$139,500 (6m)	V6/3.5S	258/7000	400/4500	rear	1115	231	3.9	–	10.1	**4.0** Pop-top barely compromises the Exige's ferocity, meaning it remains a hardcore proposition
Exige Sport 380 Coupe		$154,500 (6m)	V6/3.5S	280/6700	410/5000	rear	1110	252	3.7	–	10.4	**4.0** Powers up the venerable 3.5-litre to create C63 S-beating straight-line speed
Exige Sport 380 Roadster		$154,500 (6m)	V6/3.5S	280/6700	410/5000	rear	1110	252	3.7	–	10.4	**4.0** Same-price roadster mixes open-top driving with coupe-rigid dynamic thrills
Exige Cup 430		$199,990 (6m)	V6/3.5S	320/7000	440/2600	rear	1093	293	3.3	–	–	**4.0** Huge price for a basic and small coupe, but an incredible turn of speed for the price
Evora 400	Sep 16	$189,990 (6m) $199,990 (6a)	V6/3.5S	298/7000	410/3500	rear	1395	214	4.2	–	9.7	**3.5** Massively improved over its lifespan but struggles to justify its price tag
Evora GT410 Sport		$209,990 (6m) $219,990 (6a)	V6/3.5S	306/7000	410/3500	rear	1325	231	4.2	–	9.7	**3.5** A lot of extra coin for only a bit less weight and tad extra power
Evora GT430 Sport	Nov 18	$239,990 (6m)	V6/3.5S	320/7000	440/4500	rear	1289	248	3.8	–	10.1	**3.5** Wedges powered-up Elise engine into larger, but stripped-out Lotus GT
Evora GT430	Aug 18	$259,990 (6m)	V6/3.5S	320/7000	440/4500	rear	1299	246	3.7	–	10.1	**3.5** 20-way adjustable suspension and carbon-fibre buckets top off priciest Lotus

Maserati www.maserati.com.au

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
Ghibli		$143,990 (8a)	V6/3.0TT	257/5500	500/4500	rear	1810	142	5.6	–	9.6	**3.0** Great looks and alluring engine note but we still haven't driven it locally
Ghibli S		$175,990 (8a)	V6/3.0TT	321/5500	580/2250	rear	1810	166	4.9	–	9.6	**3.5** High-tune twin-turbo V6 gives the Ghibli real punch and sits in an unusual spot in the market
Levante S		$169,990 (8a)	V6/3.0TT	321/5750	580/1750	all	2109	152	5.2	–	10.9	**3.5** Maserati relents and offers Aussie buyers the petrol power its SUV deserves
Quattroporte Diesel		$209,990 (8a)	V6/3.0TD	202/4000	600/2000	rear	1945	104	6.4	–	6.2	**3.5** Grunty and frugal with plenty of presence, but unlikely to stir the soul
Quattroporte		$214,990 (8a)	V6/3.0TT	257/5500	500/1750	rear	1900	128	5.5	–	9.1	**3.5** A quick, classy and cheaper alternative to a Porsche Panamera that deserves more power
Quattroporte S		$239,000 (8a)	V6/3.0TT	321/5500	580/2250	rear	1860	173	5.0	–	9.3	**3.5** New twin-turbo V6 matches old V8 for grunt, but it feels its size and the V8 is more appealing
Quattroporte GTS GranSport		$345,990 (8a)	V8/3.8TT	395/6800	650(710)/	rear	1951	200	4.7	–	10.7	**3.0** New turbo V8 has mega mumbo and a classy interior... And so it should for the price.
GranTurismo MC Sportline		$295,000 (6a) $319,000 (6s)	V8/4.7	338/7000	520/4750	rear	1880	187	4.7	–	15.5	**3.0** Drop-dead gorgeous coupe finally gets extra grunt. More of a grand tourer than proper sportscar
GranCabrio Sport		$338,000 (6a)	V8/4.7	338/7000	520/4750	rear	1980	171	5.0	–	14.5	**3.5** Quicker shifting 'box and an extra 10Nm ups the aggression. Made for a coastal road, not a racetrack
GranCabrio Sport MC		$355,000 (6s)	V8/4.7	338/7000	520/4750	rear	1973	171	4.9	–	14.9	**3.0**'MC' shifts the trans rearward and cuts shift times. Will any Cabrio drivers feel the difference?
GranTurismo MC Stradale		$345,000 (6s)	V8/4.7	338/7000	520/4750	rear	1800	199	4.5	–	14.4	**3.5** Stiffer, faster Stradale is Maserati's 300km/h Trident. At this price point, there are some serious rivals

Mazda www.mazda.com.au

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
3 SP25	Nov 14	$25,690 (6m) $27,690 (6a)	I4/2.5	138/5700	250/3250	front	1308	105	*8.20*	*15.87*	*8.1*	**3.0** Much more talented dynamically than almost any owner will ever realise – hilarious fun on track
MX-5		$34,190 (6m) $36,190 (6a)	I4/1.5	97/7000	152/4500	rear	1021	95	–	–	6.2	**4.0** Superb dynamics matched with lightness and a keen engine – but larger folk will struggle
MX-5 GT	Oct 18	$41,960 (6m) $43,960 (6a)	I4/2.0	135/7000	205/4000	rear	1035	130	*6.37*	*14.54*	6.8	**4.0** Powered- and revved-up 2.0-litre distances itself from 1.5-litre, but it now starts with pricey GT
MX-5 RF	Oct 18	$39,400 (6m) $41,400 (6a)	I4/2.0	135/7000	205/4000	rear	1087	124	*6.55*	*14.65*	6.9	**4.0** Hardtop adds class and coupe looks... along with a bit more weight
MX-5 RF GT		$45,960 (6m) $47,960 (6a)	I4/2.0	135/7000	205/4000	rear	1112	121	–	–	6.9	**4.0** GT hardtop stacks up as the most premium pick, hence it comes with a significant sticker price

McLaren www.cars.mclaren.com

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
540C	Nov 17	$325,000 (7dc)	V8/3.8TT	397/7500	540/3500	rear	1311	303	3.5	–	11.1	**4.0** Supercar price leader that hits 200km/h in 10.5sec, yet it still lacks a little soul and interior options
570S	Jul 17	$379,000 (7dc)	V8/3.8TT	419/7500	600/5000	rear	1344	312	3.2	–	10.7	**4.5** Insane performance and involving dynamics. It's a shame it doesn't ride as well as the 720S
570S Spider	Oct 17	$435,750 (7dc)	V8/3.8TT	419/7500	600/5000	rear	1359	280	3.2	–	10.7	**4.5** Structural rigidity claimed to be unchanged from coupe. Hefty premium to be able to remove the roof
570GT		$406,800 (7dc)	V8/3.8TT	419/7500	600/5000	rear	1381	303	3.4	–	10.7	**4.5** Best looking Sport Series with extra luggage space and slightly softer responses than 570S

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
600LT		$455,000 (7dc)	V8/3.8TT	441/7500	620/5500	rear	1356	325	2.9	–	–	**4.5** 720S pace for $35K less, but are they too close? McLaren claims it corners harder than old 675LT
720S	Mar 18	$489,900 (7dc)	V8/4.0TT	530/7500	770/5500	rear	1419	378	2.9	–	10.7	**4.5** Otherworldly speed matched to outstanding dynamics – if only it sounded better

Mercedes-Benz www.mercedes-benz.com.au

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING
A250		$48,800 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	165/5800	350/1800	front	1455	113	6.2	–	–	**4.0** Cheaper than ever and front-drive is as fast as AWD, but torsion beam rear replaces multi-link
A250 4Matic	Feb 19	$54,800 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	165/5800	350/1800	all	1505	110	6.2	–	6.2	**3.5** A smartphone on wheels, but kerb weight is up and power below average for this price
CLA250 Sport	Sep 14	$68,700 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	155/5500	350/1200	all	1465	106	6.6	–	6.6	**3.5** Big price jump over the new-generation A250, and rivals at this price point are much faster
CLA250 Sport S/brake		$69,700 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	155/5500	350/1200	all	1490	104	6.8	–	6.9	**3.5** Looks, practicality and spritely performance rolled into one. It's just not as agile as its hatch twin
CLA45 AMG		$93,430 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	280/6000	475/2250	all	1510	176	4.2	–	7.4	**4.0** Boot adds appeal and it rides a little softer; sadly the responses are also dulled somewhat
CLA45 AMG S/brake		$93,430 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	280/6000	475/2250	all	1540	172	4.3	–	7.4	**4.0** Hardcore performance wrapped in a practical body, which makes it the heaviest MFA-based AMG
C43 AMG	Jun 17	$107,900 (9a)	V6/3.0TT	287/6100	520/2500	all	1630	176	4.7	–	*9.1*	**4.0** A quick, comfortable and entertaining drive that's more subdued than most AMGs – now with more grunt
C43 AMG Estate		$110,400 (9a)	V6/3.0TT	287/6100	520/2500	all	1685	170	4.8	–	9.3	**4.0** Engaging chassis wrapped in a wagon package. Looks quite subtle, but then that could be a plus
C63 S AMG	Sep 17	$156,840 (7a)	V8/4.0TT	375/6250	700/1750	rear	1655	227	*4.27*	*12.20*	8.6	**4.5** Amazing engine and brilliant chassis offset the terse ride and occasional gearbox stumble
C63 S AMG Estate	Jan 16	$159,340 (7a)	V8/4.0TT	375/6250	700/1750	rear	1725	217	4.0	–	8.7	**4.5** The ultimate do-everything car, though it's quite small in the back
C300 Coupe		$83,400(7a)	I4/2.0T	180/5500	370/1300	rear	1490	121	6.0	–	6.6	**3.5** A quality product and a decent steer – less convinced about that rear styling
C43 AMG Coupe		$111,900 (9a)	V6/3.0TT	287/6100	520/2500	all	1675	171	4.7	–	9.2	**4.0** The car you buy if the C63 feels a bit too full-on, and it would be the quicker car in the wet
C43 AMG Cabriolet		$124,900 (9a)	V6/3.0TT	287/6100	520/2500	all	1810	159	4.8	–	9.5	**3.5** Solid mix of class and performance; hefty price tag though
C63 S AMG Coupe	Feb 17	$163,240(7a)	V8/4.0TT	375/6250	700/1750	rear	1725	217	*4.56*	*12.48*	8.7	**4.5** Thunderous power and engaging handling but pricier than rivals and a heavy so-and-so
C63 S AMG Cabriolet	Apr 17	$181,240 (7a)	V8/4.0TT	375/6250	700/1750	rear	1850	202	4.1	–	9.3	**4.5** Front-row seats to hear AMG's thumping 4.0-litre eight. Not the keenest handler of the C63 bunch
E53 AMG		$167,129 (9a)	I6/3.0TT(E)	320/6100	520/1800	all	–	–	4.4	–	8.7	**4.0** Plenty of pace and stunning interior, but it doesn't feel very 'AMG'
E63 AMG	Feb 18	$209,240 (9a)	V8/4.0TT	420/5750	750/2250	all	1950	216	3.5	–	9.3	**4.5** If you're not interested in Drift Mode the base E63 could be all the super sedan you need
E63 S AMG	Feb 18	$239,240 (9a)	V8/4.0TT	450/5750	850/2500	all	1955	230	*3.40*	*11.28*	9.3	**4.5** The prototypical super sedan lacks only a smidge of refinement
E53 AMG Coupe	Dec 18	$172,729 (9a)	I6/3.0TT(E)	320/6100	520/1800	all	1895	169	*4.53*	*12.68*	8.7	**4.0** New inline six as smooth as the styling, plus it's among the first AMGs to get an electric kick
E53 AMG Cabriolet		$181,329 (9a)	I6/3.0TT(E)	320/6100	520/1800	all	1980	162	4.5	–	8.7	**3.5** Introduction of '53' cab and coupe make for the quickest two-door E-Class AMGs
CLS450	Sep 18	$155,529 (9a)	I6/3.0TT	270/6100	500/1600	all	1940	165	4.8	–	7.8	**3.5** Great car, gorgeous interior, swift acceleration, but handling tuned for the mass market, not the enthusiast
CLS53 AMG	Apr 18	$179,529 (9a)	I6/3.0TT(E)	320/6100	520/1800	all	1980	162	4.5	–	8.7	**4.0** Beautiful interior and eye-catching looks backed by high-tech new inline six
S450 L		$227,500 (9a)	I6/3.0TT	270/6000	520/2000	rear	2015	134	5.1	–	6.9	**4.5** Incredible fuel economy from new mild hybrid inline six
S560		$269,630 (9a)	V8/4.0TT	345/5250	700/2000	rear	2045	169	4.7	–	8.2	**4.5** The world's best limousine with incredible tech and interior. You might enjoy it more in the back seat
S560 L	Jul 18	$294,630 (9a)	V8/4.0TT	345/5250	700/2000	rear	2070	167	4.7	–	8.2	**4.5** More rear-seat room for ultimate passenger comfort. Sadly, a chauffeur doesn't come standard
S63 AMG L	Nov 18	$374,630 (7a)	V8/4.0TT	450/6000	900/2750	rear	2070	217	*4.18*	*12.04*	–	**4.0** Autobahn-crusher now cheaper with epic torque from 4.0-litre V8. Shame there's no AWD option
S650 Maybach		$424,630 (7a)	V12/6.0TT	463/5000	1000/2300	rear	2360	196	4.7	–	12.7	**4.0** Revisions bring the full-fat S65-spec engine but two-tone paintwork in questionable taste
S560 Coupe		$314,900 (9a)	V8/4.0TT	345/5500	700/2000	rear	2158	160	4.6	–	8.5	**4.5** The ultimate grand tourer – first-class ground-based travel
S560 Cabriolet		$336,900 (9a)	V8/4.0TT	345/5500	700/2000	rear	2176	159	4.6	–	9.9	**4.5** Vitamin-D exposure in opulent style, though it's very showy
S63 AMG Coupe		$370,500 (9a)	V8/4.0TT	450/6000	900/2750	rear	2046	220	–	–	9.0	**4.5** Brutal acceleration and polished dynamics matched by stunning interior and ride comfort
S63 AMG Cabriolet		$399,900 (9a)	V8/4.0TT	450/6000	900/2750	rear	2148	209	–	–	10.2	**4.0** Hell-raising acceleration and gorgeous looks, but don't get too enthusiastic in the bends
S65 AMG Coupe		$508,900 (7a)	V12/6.0TT	463/5400	1000/2300	rear	2140	216	4.1	–	12.0	**4.0** For some, only 12 cylinders will do. Smart money buys the S63
S65 AMG Cabriolet		$520,500 (7a)	V12/6.0TT	463/5400	1000/2300	rear	2202	213	4.1	–	12.0	**4.0** Perfect weekend wheels if you live in Australia's elite suburbs
SLC43 AMG	Dec 16	$135,530 (9a)	V6/3.0TT	270/6000	520/2000	rear	1520	178	4.7	–	7.8	**3.0** Brilliant drivetrain and strong brakes tied to unforgiving ride quality and wooden steering
SL500		$280,530 (9a)	V8/4.7TT	335/5250	700/1800	rear	1720	187	4.3	–	9.1	**3.0** Fantastic engine and sleeker looks undermined by previous-gen interior and body wobbles
SL63 AMG		$370,530 (7a)	V8/5.5TT	430/5500	900/2250	rear	1770	243	4.1	–	10.1	**4.0** Perfect combination of performance and luxury despite some creaks from the bodyshell
AMG GT	Feb 16	$261,130 (7dc)	V8/4.0TT	350/6000	630/1700	rear	1540	227	4.0	–	9.3	**4.0** A temptingly aggressive alternative to a Porsche 911, but tick that adaptive damper option box
AMG GT S	Ann 17	$301,130 (7dc)	V8/4.0TT	384/6250	670/1800	rear	1570	255	3.8	–	9.4	**4.5** Chassis revisions and extra power finally fulfill the GT S's potential
AMG GT C	Feb 19	$316,130 (7dc)	V8/4.0TT	410/6750	680/1900	rear	1625	252	*3.66*	*11.55*	11.4	**4.5** Monster performance for those who find the GT R a bit ostentatious
AMG GT R	Jun 18	$351,130 (7dc)	V8/4.0TT	430/6250	700/1900	rear	1555	277	3.6	–	11.4	**4.5** AMG GT in its ultimate form, yet ride also improved. This or a 911 GT3?
AMG GT Roadster	Ann 17	$286,130 (7dc)	V8/4.0TT	350/6000	630/1700	rear	1595	219	4.0	–	9.4	**3.5** Incredible road presence and engine note to die for but needs options to give its best dynamically
AMG GT C Roadster	Jun 17	$341,130 (7dc)	V8/4.0TT	410/6750	680/1900	rear	1660	247	3.7	–	11.4	**4.5** Steals choice bits from the GT R to create one hell of a drop-top experience
GLA45 AMG	Jan 15	$89,530 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	280/6000	475/2250	all	1510	175	4.4	–	7.5	**4.0** Roomier and more comfortable than the lumpy A45, but it isn't particularly attractive
GLC43 AMG		$103,130 (9a)	V6/3.0TT	270/6000	520/2000	all	1855	146	4.9	–	8.8	**3.5** We'd buy a C43, but most people will probably buy this. Strong engine
GLC43 AMG Coupe		$110,630 (9a)	V6/3.0TT	270/6000	520/2000	all	1855	146	4.9	–	8.8	**3.5** $7500 premium over GLC43 in the pursuit of questionable style... we'd choose a C43 Estate?
GLC63 S AMG		$164,530 (9a)	V8/4.0TT	375/5500	700/1750	all	1935	194	3.8	–	10.7	**4.0** Sprog-hauling and supercar-chasing talents, but the dynamics aren't a patch on a Macan
GLC63 S AMG Coupe	Jul 18	$171,530 (9a)	V8/4.0TT	375/5500	700/1750	all	1945	192	*3.92*	*12.05*	10.9	**4.0** Engaging wagon on stilts is easier on the eye, however tall rear passengers won't be so impressed
GLE63 S AMG	Jan 16	$192,840 (7a)	V8/5.5TT	430/5750	760/1750	all	2270	189	4.2	–	*18.6*	**3.5** Not cut out for corners, but engine note and vicious acceleration cures all ills
GLE63 S AMG Coupe		$201,540 (7a)	V8/5.5TT	430/5500	760/1750	all	2275	189	4.2	–	11.9	**3.5** A car that you really don't want to like, until you drive it and experience its pace
GLS63 AMG		$219,290 (7a)	V8/5.5TT	430/5500	760/1750	all	2370	181	4.6	–	12.3	**3.0** This is a ridiculous machine, yet it's also a wonderful machine. Very likeable and massive space
G63 AMG		$247,330 (9a)	V8/4.0TT	430/6000	850/2500	all	2485	173	4.5	–	13.1	**3.0** New chassis and 850Nm 4.0-litre, old looks and side pipes, $15K pricier than before

MINI www.mini.com.au

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING
Cooper S	Jun 18	$39,900 (6m) $42,700 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	141/6000	(300)/1250	front	1195	118	6.8	–	6.3	**3.5** Solves all the old model's problems, but creates a new one... it's not as engaging. Needs better tyres
Cooper S 5-door		$41,150 (6m) $43,950 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	141/6000	(300)/1250	front	1255	112	6.9	–	6.4	**3.5** A smaller alternative to a VW Golf GTI. However, the extra size and weight means it isn't 'mini' at all
Cooper S Convertible		$47,900 (6m/7dc)	I4/2.0T	141/6000	(300)/1250	front	1295	109	7.2	–	6.5	**3.5** More practical and a better drive than the old Cabrio. But that's not saying an awful lot...
Cooper S Clubman	Feb 16	$44,900 (6m/8a)	I4/2.0T	141/6000	(300)/1250	front	1360	104	7.1	–	6.0	**3.5** Smart interior and supple chassis. Extra heft burdens the poor 2.0-litre... then there's the weird looks
Cooper S Countryman		$46,500 (8a)	I4/2.0T	141/6000	(300)/1250	front	1505	94	7.4	–	6.5	**3.5** Surprisingly cohesive looks with extra practicality. It's not very mini, or overly fast, and it is heavy
Cooper JCW	Aug 16	$49,900 (6m) $52,850 (8a)	I4/2.0T	170/6000	320/1250	front	1220	139	6.3	–	6.9	**3.0** More power and playful handling, but the steering's iffy, the ride is firm and it is expensive
Cooper JCW Convertible		$57,900 (6m/8a)	I4/2.0T	170/6000	320/1250	front	1320	129	6.6	–	7.0	**3.5** Drop-top suits the Mini vibe and it's combined with strong performance – sadly, handling is diluted
Cooper JCW Clubman	Nov 17	$54,900 (8a)	I4/2.0T	170/6000	350/1250	all	1490	114	*7.13*	*14.91*	7.2	**3.5** Clubman chassis scores the power it deserves... not sure it's enough for the weighty beast
Cooper JCW Countryman		$56,900 (8a)	I4/2.0T	170/6000	350/1250	all	1555	109	6.5	–	7.4	**3.5** Mini with the lot gains a maxi price tag... Clubman is much cooler, cheaper and lighter

Morgan www.morgancars.com.au

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING
4/4		$89,900 (5m)	I4/1.6	82/6000	132/5800	rear	795	103	8.0	–	6.4	**3.0** Ye olde charm and definitely a unique drive experience. You're essentially buying a brand-new antique

“I’VE BEEN HARBOURING THE IDEA OF BUILDING AN ELECTRIC CAR ... IT JUST APPEALS TO ME AS AN INTERESTING PROJECT”

David Morley

AWWW. LOOKS LIKE THE UNIVERSE has spoiled my fun again. For a while now, I’ve been harbouring the idea of building an electric car. As in, taking something like a two-grand hatchback, tearing out the engine and stuffing what’s left of it full of electric motor and Lithium-ion batteries.

It just appeals to me as an interesting project. It’s not that I’ve gone all green or anything but I do have solar panels on the roof at 13 Struggle Street and I genuinely love the idea of (a) hitting the fast lane for free, and (b) jamming it up the people who think they can jack up the per-litre price at the start of a long weekend and not have me notice.

Having driven a dual-motor Tesla, I’m also kind of keen on the notion of giving the end product some serious blurt. But also, I think it’d be an interesting thing with which to be involved even if there would be the inevitable skun knuckles, thrown spanners and wicked language.

I even had the car picked out: a late ’70s RA40 Toyota Celica Liftback. Stay with me here. For a start, the Celica is a size bigger than a Hyundai Getz or Suzuki Swift (two of the cars on the radar of the home-garage EV builder). But thanks to all that ’70s tech (ie, nuthin’) the Celica with its one-size-up footprint still weighs just about a tonne which is, obviously, a big factor in any EV when it comes to ultimate acceleration and overall range.

I also happen to like these elderly Tojos, but that’s beside the point, because the relatively large, flat floor of the RA40’s luggage area would seem a natch spot to stash a bunch of batteries.

You could even remove the rear seat if necessary and then there’s still scope to build a false floor over the whole lot and have the space to fit enough soft luggage for a weekend at Comic-Con (or wherever it is EV nerds like to holiday and hang out).

If you’ve ever seen Neal Bates hammering his RA40 historic rally car through the mulga at unlikely velocities, you’ll also appreciate that these Toyotas are tough old buggers, so the extra weight of a bank of Li-ions shouldn’t unduly tax the structure.

On top of that, the RA40 was one of the last rear-drive Celicas, so its layout is simpler than the operator’s manual for a hammer. The driveline is spaced out along the whole length of the car, meaning that finding space for all the gizmos, gadgets and the flux capacitor shouldn’t present too much of a head-scratch.

Finally, the styled-in-America (and let’s not forget who taught the Japanese to make coffee) Celica can be picked up for chump change and, if it goes wrong and blams through the back wall of the garage and into the swimming pool because you crossed the wrong wires, nobody much – apart from anybody enjoying a dip at the time – is going to care.

Apply the same attitude to an Aussie Holden Torana A9X Hatch and see how far you get before a horde of well-meaning, extensively tattooed middle-aged males descend, chain you to your welder and throw you in the same pool.

But here’s where the world has given my genius its latest concept-wedgie... the budget for this sort of messing about is not going to give me any change out of, say, $20K or $30K at an absolute minimum. And right now – and you can check this for yourself – I can go out and buy a Nissan Leaf for less than that same 20-gorilla low-ball number. Suddenly, my one-off, can’t-buy-parts-for, insurance-company-scaring, zero-air-bags, god-knows-what-VicRoads-will-make-of-it Toyota is dead on the water. Bugger. M

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MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
3 Wheeler	Apr 16	$93,900 (5m)	V2/2.0	60/5250	140/3250	rear	550	220	6.0	–	9.3	**3.5** An utterly unique car to be behind the wheel of. You're either going to love it or hate it
Plus 4		$99,800 (5m)	I4/2.0	115/6000	201/4500	rear	877	117	7.3	–	7.0	**3.0** It's all about living in the past while being in the future, something that can be an acquired taste
Roadster		$139,500 (6m)	V6/3.7	209/6000	370/4700	rear	950	220	5.5	–	9.8	**3.0** Power-to-weight rivals a 911 Carrera S. However, you'd really have to love it to live with it
Aero 8		$290,000 (6m/6a)	V8/4.8	270/6300	490/3400	rear	1175	230	4.5	–	12.1	**3.5** Morgan's ultimate roadster looks good and sounds better with no roof. Cabin is very cramped

Nissan www.nissan.com.au

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
Juke Nismo RS	Dec 18	$37,790 (6m) $41,490 (cvt)	I4/1.6T	160/6000	280/3600	front	1281	125	–	–	7.2	**2.5** Late to the party and priced way too high. Can't compete with hot hatches for dynamics either
370Z	Sep 10	$49,990 (6m) $52,490 (7a)	V6/3.7	245/7000	363/5200	rear	1468	162	5.85	14.04	10.4	**3.5** Now old, but latest in a long line of Z-cars. Still has an agricultural engine and snappy handling
370Z Roadster	Jun 18	$60,990 (6m) $63,490 (7a)	V6/3.7	245/7000	363/5200	rear	1478	168	5.8	–	10.9*	**3.0** Suffers little in the conversion to drop-top, but $10K for a creaky roof is too much
370Z Nismo	Jul 18	$61,490 (6m) $63,990 (7a)	V6/3.7	253/7000	371/5200	rear	1480	171	5.87	14.07	10.6	**3.5** A visual and aural refresh courtesy of Nismo. Performance suspension lacks sophistication
GT-R	Feb 17	$189,000 (6dc)	V6/3.8TT	419/6800	632/3300	all	1765	237	3.20	11.21	11.7	**4.0** Improved ride and a worthwhile interior upgrade. It's a big price increase for an ageing model
GT-R Track Edition	Nov 16	$227,000 (6dc)	V6/3.8TT	419/6800	632/3300	all	1760	238	2.7	–	11.7	**4.0** In a track environment, it's simply awesome. Question marks remain over road suitability
GT-R Nismo	Feb 18	$299,000 (6dc)	V6/3.8TT	441/6800	652/3600	all	1739	253	3.28	11.19	11.7	**4.0** There's the Track Edition, and then there's this. If you live at a circuit it's awesome

Peugeot www.peugeot.com.au

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
208 GTi Edition Definitive	Nov 18	$33,990 d/a (6m)	I4/1.6T	153/6000	300/3000	front	–	–	6.5	–	–	**3.5** Final 20 units of production mix LSD with wide front track for Polo GTI DSG pricing
308 GTi 270	Oct 18	$45,990 (6m)	I4/1.6T	200/6000	330/1900	front	1205	166	5.99	14.04	6.0	**4.0** Oft-overlooked hot hatch offers impressive performance at a now-reduced price

Porsche www.porsche.com.au

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
718 Cayman	Ann 16	$114,900 (6m) $117,132 (7dc)	F4/2.0T	220/6500	380/1950	rear	1335	165	5.1	–	7.4	**4.5** Porsche's entry sportscar sets the bar high... but it's hardly a cheap deal in anyone's language
718 Cayman S	Feb 18	$145,100 (6m) $150,090 (7dc)	F4/2.5T	257/6500	420/1900	rear	1355	190	3.95	12.02	8.1	**4.5** An almost flawless sports car that only struggles to stir the emotions
718 Cayman GTS		$172,700 (6m) $178,680 (7dc)	F4/2.5T	269/6500	420/1900	rear	1375	191	4.6	–	9.0	**4.5** Optional PDK and Sport Chrono equals 4.1sec 0-100km/h. A lot of coin for an average-sounding four
718 Boxster	Jun 16	$117,700 (6m) $119,960 (7dc)	F4/2.0T	220/6500	380/1950	rear	1335	165	4.7*	–	6.9*	**4.5** Turbo grunt means base Boxster will offer more than enough performance for most
718 Boxster S	Jun 16	$147,900 (6m) $152,890 (7dc)	F4/2.5T	257/6500	420/1900	rear	1355	190	4.2*	–	7.3*	**4.5** Approaching supercar speed with beautiful chassis balance. Now much more expensive than it was
718 Boxster GTS		$175,500 (6m) $181,480 (7dc)	F4/2.5T	269/6500	420/1900	rear	1375	191	4.6	–	9.0	**4.5** Looks the biz with black exterior and Alcantara interior trim. Enters the realm of 'serious' money
911 Carrera S		$265,000 (8dc)	F6/3.0TT	331/6500	530/2300	rear	1515	218	3.5	–	–	**4.5** All-new 992 delivers increased comfort, handling and speed, though no manual (yet!)
911 Carrera 4S		$281,100 (8dc)	F6/3.0TT	331/6500	530/2300	all	1565	212	3.4	–	–	**4.5** All-wheel drive emphasises weight gain; we say grab the rear-drive one
911 Carrera S Cabriolet		$286,500 (8dc)	F6/3.0TT	331/6500	530/2300	rear	1585	209	3.7	–	–	**4.5** Even new Cabriolet can't dent epic performance previously the domain of Porsche GT models
911 Carrera S 4S Cabriolet		$302,600 (8dc)	F6/3.0TT	331/6500	530/2300	all	1635	202	3.6	–	–	**4.5** Tips the $300K mark, and we'd rather a GT3 Touring for this coin (for the resale, too)
911 GT3 Touring	Mar 18	$326,400 (6m)	F6/4.0	368/8250	460/6000	rear	1413	260	3.9	–	12.7	**5.0** Wing-less manual-only GT3 keeps the 911 R dream alive
911 GT3	Jul 18	$326,400 (6m/7dc)	F6/4.0	368/8250	460/6000	rear	1413	260	3.4	–	12.7	**5.0** One of the finest driver's cars ever built, hampered only by lack of availability
911 GT3 RS	Jun 18	$416,100 (7dc)	F6/4.0	383/8250	470/6000	rear	1430	249	3.2	–	12.8	**5.0** New engine and Weissach Package makes the ultimate track 911 even more hardcore
911 GT2 RS	Feb 19	$645,000 (7dc)	F6/3.8TT	515/7000	750/2500	rear	1470	350	3.13	10.63	11.8	**5.0** Probably the fastest thing on these pages... nuff said. Lacks the GT3's scintillating soundtrack
Panamera 4S	Apr 17	$310,100 (8dc)	V6/2.9TT	324/6600	550/1750	all	1870	173	4.4	–	8.2	**4.0** Stuttgart's fresh limo doesn't hang around. All-wheel drive is of questionable relevance in Oz
Panamera 4S Sport Turismo	Oct 17	$317,400 (8dc)	V6/2.9TT	324/6600	550/1750	all	1915	169	4.4	–	8.3	**4.0** Finally a good-looking Panamera, and it can seat five. Might need to ditch the rugrats to buy one
Panamera 4S Diesel		$318,600 (8dc)	V8/4.0TTD	310/5000	850/1000	all	2050	151	4.5	–	6.8	**4.0** Slick PDK handles big-grunt diesel beautifully. A car you buy more for economy than performance
Panamera 4S Diesel Sport	Oct 17	$325,900 (8dc)	V8/4.0TTD	310/5000	850/1000	all	2095	148	4.5	–	6.8	**4.0** Probably all the performance a loaded family could want. Torquey diesel's not as inspiring as petrols
Panamera GTS		$364,100 (8dc)	V8/4.0TT	338/6000	620/1800	all	1995	169	4.1		10.3	**4.0** No more high-rev natural aspiration here, but two-tonne Pana likely all the better for it
Panamera GTS Sport Turismo		$371,400 (8dc)	V8/4.0TT	338/6000	620/1800	all	2035	166	4.1		10.6	**4.0** A mix of prettiness, practicality and performance only challenged by an RS6. Or Pana Turbo...
Panamera Turbo	Apr 17	$384,100 (8dc)	V8/4.0TT	404/5750	770/1960	all	1995	191	3.8	–	9.4	**4.0** Crushing on-paper performance and cosseting luxury. Yes, it's lighter, but still a big bertha
Panamera Turbo Sport Turismo	Nov 18	$390,300 (8dc)	V8/4.0TT	404/5750	770/1960	all	2035	188	3.38	11.49	9.5	**4.0** For the family who wants to dominate the carpark. An RS6, with the same engine, costs $150K less
Panamera Turbo S E-Hybrid	Oct 17	$460,100 (8dc)	V8/4.0TT	500/6000	850/1400	all	2310	216	3.4	–	2.2	**4.0** Scarcely believable performance/economy. All that hybrid gear adds 315kg over a Panamera Turbo
Panamera Turbo S E-H Sport		$466,400 (8dc)	V8/4.0TT	500/6000	850/1400	all	2325	215	3.4	–	3.0	**4.0** Hyper-wagon with green credentials – $500K is a lot for a 2325kg family car
Macan GTS	Jan 17	$113,300 (7dc)	V6/3.0TT	265/6000	500/1650	all	1895	140	5.0*	–	8.8	**4.0** Looks quite cool as SUVs go and it's a bit cheaper than the Turbo. Coincidentally, it is also not as fast
Macan Turbo	Aug 14	$133,100 (7dc)	V6/3.6TT	294/6000	550/1350	all	1925	153	4.8	–	9.2	**4.0** Drives better than it has any right to despite low-down lag. Lacking a meaty engine note
Cayenne S		$154,700 (8a)	V6/2.9TT	324/5700	550/1800	all	2020	160	5.2	–	9.2	**4.0** New 2.9-litre twin-turbo V6 as fast as old Cayenne GTS, and now lighter and slightly cheaper
Cayenne Turbo	Ann 18	$239,000 (8a)	V8/4.0TT	404/5750	770/1960	all	2175	186	4.1	–	11.7	**4.0** Continues to redefine physics to power oversteer the kids to school

Range Rover www.landrover.com.au

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
Evoque HSE Dynamic Si4	May 14	$82,781 (9a)	I4/2.0T	177/5500	340/1750	all	1640	107	–	–	13.6	**3.0** Concept-car looks with a classy interior and it drives well. Options list is terrifying
Velar D300		$92,850 (8a)	V6/3.0TD	221/4000	700/1500	all	1959	113	6.5	–	6.4	**3.0** Rock-star styling crushes Macan with diesel torque and efficiency. Needs lots of options ticked
Velar P380	Feb 19	$93,462 (8a)	V6/3.0S	280/6500	450/3500	all	1884	149	5.7	–	9.4	**3.0** F-Type blown V6 is a goer and the interior is gorgeous. Price ascends as quickly as fuel descends
Sport HSE Dynamic		$173,000 (8a)	V8/5.0S	386/6500	625/2500	all	2323	166	–	–	12.8	**4.0** Great handling, wonderful engine and good looks. Some will see it as the poor man's Range Rover
Sport Autobio. Dynamic		$204,300 (8a)	V8/5.0S	386/6500	625/2500	all	2323	166	–	–	12.8	**4.0** Drives like an enormous hot hatch. However, it's thirsty and the off-road ability is wasted on most
Sport SVR		$238,200 (8a)	V8/5.0S	423/6500	700/2500	all	2310	183	4.5	–	12.8	**3.5** Ludicrous acceleration with an anti-social exhaust noise. This performance-4x4 thing is a bit silly
SDV8 Autobiography	Dec 18	$256,000 (8a)	V8/4.4TTD	250/3500	740/1750	all	2504	100	6.9	–	8.4	**4.0** Diesel V8 perfect fit for the Rangie's calming character... still incredibly big and heavy
5.0 SC Autobiography		$268,900 (8a)	V8/5.0S	386/6500	625/2500	all	2383	162	5.4	–	12.8	**4.0** Like an off-road S-Class with its incredible ride and feel-good factor. Fuel tank has a hole in it...
SV Autobio. Dynamic		$341,400 (8a)	V8/5.0S	416/6500	700/3500	all	2497	167	–	–	12.8	**3.5** Snarling F-type engine adds plenty of theatre, but add a confused personality and little speed

Renault www.renault.com.au

MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
Clio RS 200 Sport		$30,990 (6dc)	I4/1.6T	147/6050	260/2000	front	1204	122	6.7	–	5.9	**4.0** Facelifted favourite gets chequered-flag DRLs and an extra 20Nm, but still no manual option
Clio RS 200 Cup		$32,490 (6dc)	I4/1.6T	147/6050	260/2000	front	1204	122	6.7	–	5.9	**4.0** Likes to wag its tail and uses a zesty drivetrain. Sound is lacking and the shift paddles are poor
Megane GT	Ann 16	$38,990 (7dc)	I4/1.6T	151/6000	280/2400	front	1392	108	7.1	–	6.0	**3.5** Sharpened Frenchie promises to be an RS-lite. Unkillable ESP means it fails to deliver on promise
Megane GT Wagon		$39,990 (7dc)	I4/1.6T	151/6000	280/2400	front	1393	106	7.4	–	6.0	**3.5** Sporty-ish wagon a French forte... Octavia RS wagon far more focused, if a little noisier
Megane RS 280	Nov 18	$44,990 (6m) $47,490 (6dc)	I4/1.8T	205/6000	390/2400	front	1407	146	5.8*	–	7.5*	**4.0** Class-defining Meg RS is back, with five doors and a tough new look, ready to throttle i30 N
Megane RS 280 Cup	Feb 19	$46,480 (6m)	I4/1.8T	205/6000	390/2400	front	1407	146	5.98	14.07	7.4	**4.0** Drivers will want the Cup for its Brembos, LSD and 19s, and tellingly it's manual only

GORDON MURRAY IS BEST KNOWN AS DESIGNER OF THE MCLAREN F1, BUT IN THE '90S HE DIDN'T STOP THERE, AS TIFF RECALLS

Tiff Needell

WHILE THERE'S PLENTY OF DEBATE about mainstream icons that might be a good investment for the future, it's always those hidden little treasures that can bring up a surprise or two.

Filming the latest BAC Mono recently reminded me of just such a machine – The Rocket! Created in 1991 by the ever-inventive McLaren F1 designer Gordon Murray, and built by his and Chris Craft's Light Car Company, it was like a 1950s Grand Prix car for the road.

Another YouTube search will find much younger versions of me and Jeremy Clarkson delighting in the thrills it provided when we tested it for *Top Gear*. More recently, Jay Leno has dug his one out to create a new surge of interest.

It wasn't quite the first racing car for the road. When Ford launched Formula Ford back in 1967, they put some bicycle wheels and headlamps onto a Lotus 51 to make it road legal. But the Rocket was probably the first proper production car offering a genuine single-seater racing car experience. Gordon even made room for a passenger sitting in tandem behind the driver.

It might also be the lightest production car, at just 390kg. With its four-cylinder Yamaha motorbike engine producing 107kW, the Rocket had a power-to-weight ratio of 276kW per tonne – more than most modern-day GT cars. Launched with a price of around £45,000 (AUD$80,000), it was cheaper than a Porsche 911, whereas the BAC Mono is about twice the price of a modern 911.

With low, high and reverse ratio options for the five-speed sequential gearbox, you could scream the Yamaha powerplant up to its 12,500rpm limit while sitting low and snugly cocooned inside the cockpit. Freakily, the Rocket could do 167km/h in reverse, as one intrepid journalist found when he set an unofficial world record in one.

The wind blasts through your hair and you feel every ripple of the road through the light and direct steering. Driving alone, you can have a neat cockpit cover with a rest that butts up to your head. Remove that and your passenger can slide in behind with their legs running down either side of you. The only problem is that if you carry two 80kg humans the power to weight drops to 194kW per tonne.

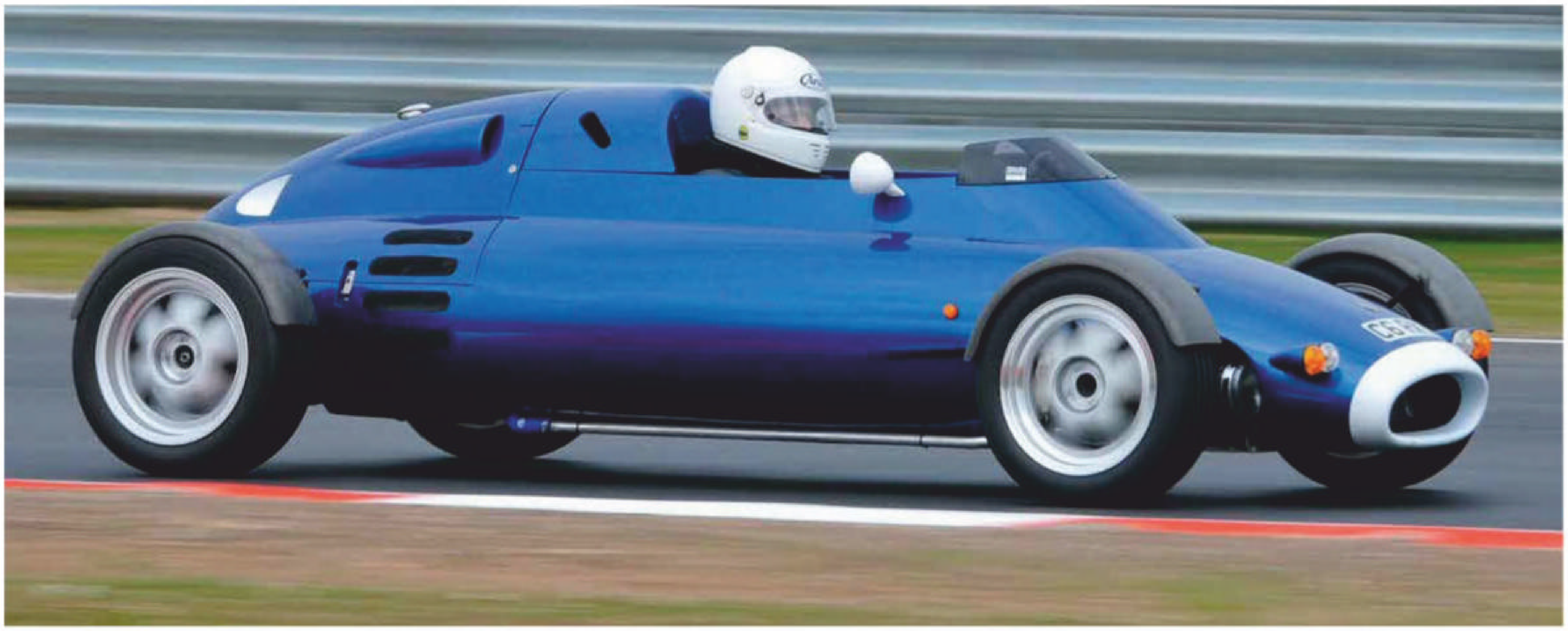
In the *Top Gear* test I took the Rocket around Goodwood. It was a beautifully balanced delight, as you'd expect from the designer of World Championship-winning Grand Prix cars. With no aerodynamic aids at all, it was frisky, yet easily controllable.

The modern-day obsession with lap times is taking away some of the simple enjoyment of driving a car on the limit. The Rocket takes you back to where it should be.

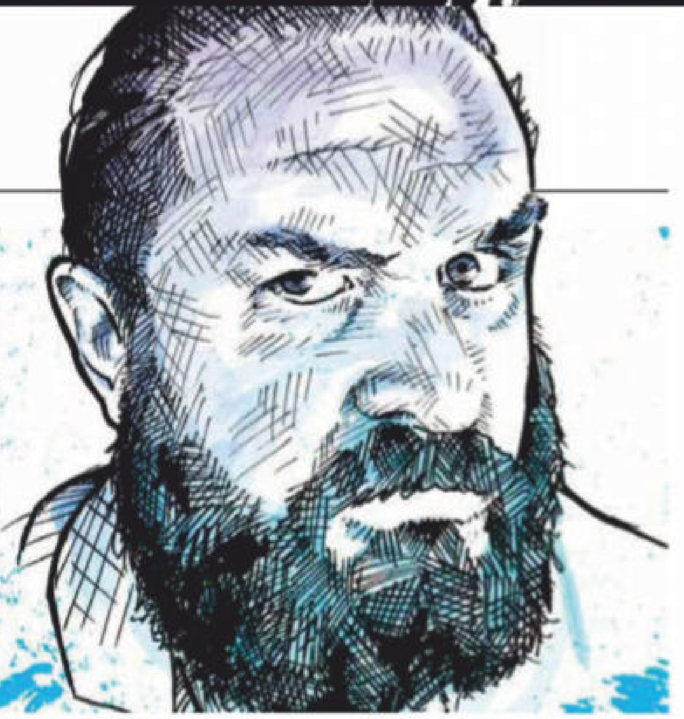
While the Mono can hammer around a track at speeds that require gym visits to build up your neck muscles, the Rocket in many ways provides a more enjoyable drive while lapping a lot slower.

Only 55 Rockets were built as the ever-increasing complications of getting road compliance began to push up the costs. The good news though is that if you owned one today and wanted to sell it, you'd be asking around £100,000 (AUD$180K).

Without the necessary funds to buy either an old Rocket or a new Mono, the fun that both these cars have given me has made me think about Ford's original idea. Maybe I can attach a few bicycle accessories to my Lotus 69F and head out onto the road... M



MODEL	TESTED	PRICE	ENGINE	KW/RPM	NM/RPM	DRIVE	KERB KG	KW/TONNE	0-100 KM/H	0-400M	FUEL CONS	RATING ★
Rolls-Royce www.rolls-roycemotorcars.com												
Ghost Series II	Feb 15	$595,000 DA (8a)	V12/6.6TT	420/5250	780/1500	rear	2360	17 8	4.9	–	14.0	4.5 Quicker and sportier, but no less opulent. What's the point of a sportier, faster Rolls Royce, though?
Ghost EWB Series II		$675,000 DA (8a)	V12/6.6TT	420/5250	780/1500	rear	2450	171	5.0	–	14.1	4.5 Even more luxurious with rear-seat space. For those who prefer someone else to do the driving
Phantom	Nov 17	$855,000 DA (8a)	V12/6.75TT	420/6000	900/1700	rear	2560	164	5.3	–	13.9	4.5 Now with twin turbos and 130kg in sound deadening. Even this small Phantom is still massive
Phantom EWB		$990,000 DA (8a)	V12/6.75TT	420/6000	900/1700	rear	2610	161	5.4	–	13.9	4.5 Small-apartment-sized legroom and 900Nm has great appeal. Some cabin details are OTT
Wraith	Dec 14	$645,000 DA (8a)	V12/6.6TT	465/5600	800/1500	rear	2360	197	4.6	–	14.0	4.5 Incredible comfort and luxury with traffic-stopping styling... Definitely no drivers' car, though
Dawn	Jun 16	$749,000 DA (8a)	V12/6.6TT	420/5250	780/1500	rear	2560	164	4.9	–	14.2	4.5 Jaw-dropping looks and a 'you've-made-it' driving experience that's best suited to wafting
Cullinan		$685,000 DA (8a)	V12/6.75TT	420/5000	850/1600	all	2660	158	–	–	15.0	4.0 More is more is more (is less?) SUV can be ordered now, but local deliveries start early 2019
Skoda www.skoda.com.au												
Octavia RS 180TSI		$39,990 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	180/6700	370/1600	front	1445	125	6.6	–	6.6	4.0 LSD and 180kW for sub-$40K is a brilliant move by Skoda. Shame about the DSG-only status
Octavia RS 180TSI Wagon		$41,490 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	180/6700	370/1600	front	1467	123 7	6.7	–	6.7	4.0 The Octavia pulls its ace card, with a superb mix of performance and practicality, now for less
Octavia RS245	Ann 18	$45,490 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	180/6700	370/1600	front	1445	125	6.6	–	6.6	4.0 Now that the base model has an LSD and 180kW, the RS245 becomes a luxe-pack model grade
Octavia RS245 Wagon	Jan 18	$46,990 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	180/6700	370/1600	front	1467	123	6.7	–	6.7	4.0 So much better than a Subaru Levorg. Frumpy new styling only heightens design appeal of Golf
Superb 206TSI Sportline		$53,490 (6dc)	I4/2.0T	206/6500	350/1700	all	1537	134	5.8	–	7.3	3.5 Golf R speed in a practical package. Trade off is that it's not as agile and needs adaptive suspension
Superb 206TSI Sportline		$58,490 (6dc)	I4/2.0T	206/6500	350/1700	all	1600	129	5.8	–	7.3	3.5 Great combo of looks, speed, and smart packaging. A bit more low-down urge would be nice
Subaru www.subaru.com.au												
WRX	Nov 14	$39,340 (6m) $42,340 (cvt)	F4/2.0T	197/5600	350/2400	all	1476	138	*6.08*	*14.15*	9.2	3.5 Gains a harder edge with entertaining handling, but the lumpy power curve and firm ride remain
WRX Premium	May 14	$45,740 (6m) $48,940 (cvt)	F4/2.0T	197/5600	350/2400	all	1514	138	*6.24*	*14.27*	9.2	3.5 Extra kit makes it a more habitable place... which isn't what the WRX has traditionally been about
WRX STi	Jul 18	$50,990 (6m)	F4/2.5T	221/6000	407/4000	all	1548	146	*5.29*	*13.51*	*12.1*	3.5 Looks tough, with handling prowess and affordable price. Interior can't match class benchmarks
WRX STi Premium	Apr 16	$55,740 (6m)	F4/2.5T	221/6000	407/4000	all	1572	146	*5.49*	*13.62*	10.4	3.5 You can delete the wing, however, it isn't actually any faster than the last STi and the steering's iffy
WRX STi Spec.R	Ann 17	$57,790 (6m)	F4/2.5T	221/6000	407/4000	all	1572	146	–	–	10.4	3.5 Luxo seats and upgraded brakes for the top STI. We're not sure why it gets the hallowed 'R' badge
Liberty 3.6R		$43,140 (cvt)	F6/3.6	191/5600	350/4400	all	1605	119	7.2	–	10.3	3.0 Now cheaper and with segment-crushing power (on paper)... but it doesn't translate in reality
Levorg GT-S		$49,240 (cvt)	F4/2.0T	197/5600	350/2400	all	1591	124	6.6	–	8.7	3.0 Fast wagons are cool. Changes to awful suspension promised a lot, but didn't deliver
Levorg STI	Jan 18	$52,090 (cvt)	F4/2.0T	197/5600	350/2400	all	1591	124	6.6	–	8.7	3.0 Looks tougher than the GT-S... but drives no better
BRZ	Aug 17	$34,280 (6m)	F4/2.0	152/7000	212/6400	rear	1242	122	*7.12*	*15.08*	8.4	4.5 Looks better than the 86, with loads of handling balance. Engine really needs to be spanked for pace
BRZ		$36,280 (6a)	F4/2.0	147/7000	205/6400	rear	1264	124	–	–	7.1	4.0 Loses power, but not poise, over the manual. Auto can hide engine's flat spot well, actually
BRZ tS	Jul 18	$40,194 (6m)	F4/2.0	152/7000	212/6400	rear	1255	121	*7.48*	*15.37*	8.6	4.5 JDM special scores Brembos, Sachs dampers, STI springs... which weakens the value equation
BRZ tS		$42,194 (6a)	F4/2.0	147/7000	205/6400	rear	1277	115	–	–	7.8	4.0 Doesn't make a lot of sense to mix hardcore chassis with a slushbox, but still a good steer
Suzuki www.suzuki.com.au												
Swift Sport	Jul 18	$25,490 (6m) $27,490 (6a)	I4/1.4T	103/5500	230/2500	front	970	106	*7.86*	*15.72*	6.1	4.0 Perky engine, light chassis and loads of kit makes this back-to-basics hot hatch a winner
Tesla www.teslamotors.com												
Model S P100D		$232,402 (1a)	Dual EM	568	967	all	2241	253	2.7	–	–	4.0 Dual electric motors provide epic acceleration, but Oz infrastructure limits it to urban duties
Toyota www.toyota.com.au												
86 GT	Aug 17	$31,440 (6m)	F4/2.0	152/7000	212/6400	rear	1239	123	*7.63*	*15.36*	8.4	4.0 About as much fun as you can have in a car, regardless of price. Performance Pack option a must
86 GT		$33,740 (6a)	F4/2.0	147/7000	205/6400	rear	1261	117	–	–	7.1	4.0 As above but with less power. Road noise and ride can get irritating
86 GTS	Jul 18	$36,640 (6m)	F4/2.0	152/7000	212/6400	rear	1258	121	*7.25*	*15.19*	8.4	4.5 Revised 86 scores more power and chassis tweaks, while the BRZ offers better value equation
86 GTS		$38,940 (6a)	F4/2.0	147/7000	205/6400	rear	1278	115	–	–	7.1	4.0 Starting to get up there in price, yet with Performance Pack still optional
Volkswagen www.volkswagen.com.au												
Polo GTI		$30,990 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	147/6000	320/1500	front	1355	108	6.7	–	5.9	4.0 Larger, more polished hot hatch, but heavier, no faster and drops manual (for now)
Golf GTI		$45,490 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	180/6200	370/1600	front	–	–	–	–	–	4.5 Full-phat 180kW and LSD now in five-door guise to challenge i30 N, but tragically DSG only...
Golf R	Mar 18	$56,490 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	213/6200	380/1800	all	1450	–	4.8	–	7.2	4.5 Faster than before with a beefy engine note. Sadly, we don't get the 228kW/400Nm overseas tune
Golf R Wagon		$57,490 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	213/6200	380/1800	all	–	–	–	–	–	4.5 This wagon trumps any premium medium SUV, but price is getting into S3 Sportback territory
Golf R Special Edition		$61,990 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	213/6200	380/1800	all	1450	–	4.8	–	7.2	4.5 Bigger brakes and Akropovic exhaust put the hardcore in R, but DSG only and price is steep...
Passat 206TSI wagon		$59,990 (6dc)	I4/2.0T	206/6500	350/1700	all	1639	127	5.7	–	7.4	3.0 Extended hatch lends practical appeal... but the light-footed Golf R wagon is far more tantalising
Arteon 206TSI		$65,490 (7dc)	I4/2.0T	206/6500	350/1800	all	1658	124	5.6	–	7.5	3.5 Stretched liftback looks good, remains quick. Although it's a hefty premium for a tizzed-up Passat
Volvo www.volvocars.com.au												
V40 T5 R-Design	Jul 15	$50,990 (6a)	I4/2.0T	180/5400	360/1800	front	1468	127	*6.91*	*15.02*	8.1	3.0 Punchy four-pot, pleasing dynamics and stylish design. However, it's heavy and the ride is firm
S60 Polestar	Jun 17	$89,702 (8a)	I4/2.0TS	270/6000	470/3100	all	1750	127	4.7	–	7.8	3.5 Twin-charged four gains a price cut. It needs more involving handling and we miss the six's sound
XC60 T8 R-Design		$92,990 (8a)	I4/2.0TS (E)	300/5700	510/3100	all	2105	147	5.3	–	2.1	3.5 Highest power-to-weight ratio company wide, but the fuel-economy claims are unrealistic
V60 Polestar		$92,702 (8a)	I4/2.0TS	270/6000	470/3100	all	1770	127	4.7	–	7.8	3.5 Looks good and has that fast Volvo wagon cool factor – which you pay for



> “I CAN ONLY THINK OF TWO HAND SIGNALS STILL IN USE: THE THANK YOU WAVE AND A LESS FRIENDLY SINGLE-DIGIT ONE”

Tim Keen

FIVE FINGERS. FIST. FIVE FINGERS. Fist.

It seemed pretty clear to me, an improv hand-signal for the VW Caddy driver coming towards me, that he had his hazard lights on. It was the best I could come up with on short notice, and I maintain that it’s a pretty good imitation of a blinking blinker.

Although I suppose it could have looked like I was threatening to punch the guy five times, or just that I was flamboyantly listening to show tunes. (Jazz hand! And again!). Certainly the bloke gave me a peculiar look as he drove past. Not a jazz fan, probably.

There’s a surprisingly small number of widely accepted hand signals while driving. There’s the arm out the window for turning right, or the upright arm for stopping, but who uses those anymore? Anyone driving around in a heap without working brake lights is probably using their spare hand to hold a Winnie Blue and a can in a paper bag anyway.

Offhand (as it were) I can only think of two hand signals still in common use: the thank you wave (which is cruelly underused), and a less friendly single-digit one (which is usually used in conjunction with verbal communication anyway).

There’s a couple of car signals most people would recognise. Flashing your highbeams says “there’s a cop ahead”, and using your blinkers before you turn says “I’m not from Sydney”. Most car-to-car communication is done via the horn, which is not an instrument of subtlety – pretty much just a long honk for “You’re a dickhead”, and a short toot for “You’re a dickhead, but I can see you’re bigger than me.”

For a system that relies so heavily on cooperation between strangers, it’s sort of amazing that there’s not more signing in the driving ecosystem. A car sign language. Maybe it’s time we introduced one.

A few I’ve used in the past, to varying degrees of success are: a vertical rolling-hand motion for “Go, for God’s sake.” This is sometimes used in conjunction with a horizontal rolling-hand motion, meaning “It’s a roundabout, how come you don’t know how to use a roundabout”, followed by cradling-the-face-in-the-hand for “How do you even have a licence if you can’t use a roundabout, what is the world coming to, Jesus give me strength.”

On suburban streets, thickly layered with parked cars on both sides, a disappointed and long-suffering shake of the head tells the oncoming Volvo XC90 driver, “Just because you’re not confident keeping that thing on your side of the road doesn’t mean you get the whole road.”

And, closely related, a loose fist, gently oscillated up and down at the wrist, says “Just because you’re in a Mercedes doesn’t mean you get the whole road by default.”

On a road without a passing lane, you may need a quick blast of the horn to get the attention of the driver in front; then, an index finger, pointed urgently and repeatedly at one of their rear tyres, means “God you’re slow and I had to find some way to get you to pull over so I could escape your sad stinkcloud of mediocrity.”

An open palm applied sharply to the forehead means, “How many times are you going to try this reverse park before you acknowledge the space is smaller than your car?”. Or, depending on context, it might mean, “Why did you put a spoiler like that on a Pulsar?”

Not all signs need to be seen to be understood. One sign you’ve probably used yourself involves a horizontal, waist-high dogleg motion with your left hand, and a left-then-right shimmy with your right hand, coupled with sharply pointing your right toe, and says clearly to all: “So long, losers, the overtaking lane is here at last.”

Okay, maybe most of my car sign language is a little passive-aggressive. (*I’m-sorry wave.*) Get in touch and let us know what car sign language the modern world needs instead. (*Thank you wave!*)

Oh, and the hazard light guy? I saw in my rear-view mirror that he turned his flashers off. Maybe it was just coincidence, but I like to think it was so he could hear over the clicking what show tunes I was listening to. Mission accomplished. M

BY DYLAN CAMPBELL

TRD AURION

2007

ENGINE	3456cc V6, DOHC, 24v, s/c
POWER	241kW @ 6400rpm
TORQUE	400Nm @ 4000rpm
0-100KM/H	6.1sec (as-tested, Oct '07)
PRICE (NEW)	$56,990 (3500S)

Toyota TRD Aurion

Burly supercharged sedan wanted in on FPV/HSV turf

IT WAS THE height of the FPV versus HSV wars on both road and, with Falcon and Commodore, on racetrack – and Toyota, with its big, boofy, front-drive Aurion, wanted in.

And so, in 2007, it revealed this: the Toyota Racing Development Aurion, or TRD Aurion – one of the world's most unfortunately named cars if you're inclined to read your acronyms as words.

Developed and built in Australia – something that can't *not* be celebrated anymore, no matter the car – the TRD Aurion achieved a fairly impressive 241kW and 400Nm courtesy of Toyota bolting a dirty great Eaton supercharger to the top of its 2GR-FE 3.5-litre V6. (Interestingly, this is the same engine still in service, supercharged, in the back of the Lotus Evora.)

Toyota sent the not inconsiderable power through a six-speed auto on its way to two 245-section front Dunlop Sports Maxx tyres, to the point that the TRD Aurion remains one of the most powerful factory front-drive cars ever made.

KAPUT

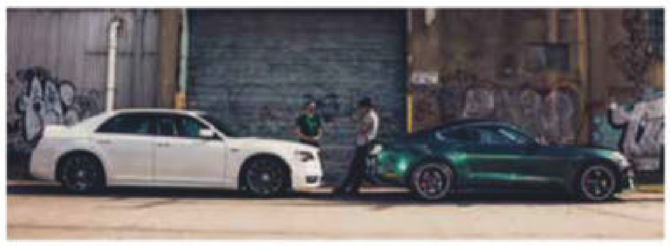
Toyota sold just 537 TRD Aurions before pulling the plug on the brand (which included a HiLux variant) in 2008, citing the GFC as the cause

Zero to 100km/h took around six seconds flat at a time when similarly priced FPVs and HSVs were in the mid- to high-fives. It helped that it weighed 'just' 1610kg. In our October 2007 issue, we were surprised by how well it drove, with no torque steer complaints, the TRD Aurion boasting a brisk grand tourer personality, if not as fun as its rear-drive rivals, particularly as you couldn't wind the then-primitive ESC back, at all. The engine note also wasn't anything special, but overall, for a first effort, we came away impressed.

If there's one thing Toyota got half right, it was the styling enhancements. With new front and rear bars incorporating more than a dash of FPV/HSV influence, there was also a lower stance and huge (for the time) 19-inch wheels hiding upgraded PBR-developed brakes. Indeed, the TRD Aurion was as cruel on the eyes as it was easy on its front tyres.

Unfortunately, the TRD Aurion was short lived, axed just the next year. Today, they're $10K-$15K used. M

03/19 NEXT ISSUE



LONG LIVE V8 REAR-DRIVE!

BULLITT VS 300 SRT
Ford's feel-good ponycar tackles Hemi's heavy hitter

PLUS: 24 Hours in a Bugatti Chiron; 600LT vs GT3 RS vs Huracan Performante; Nissan 370Z revisited

ON SALE MARCH 7!

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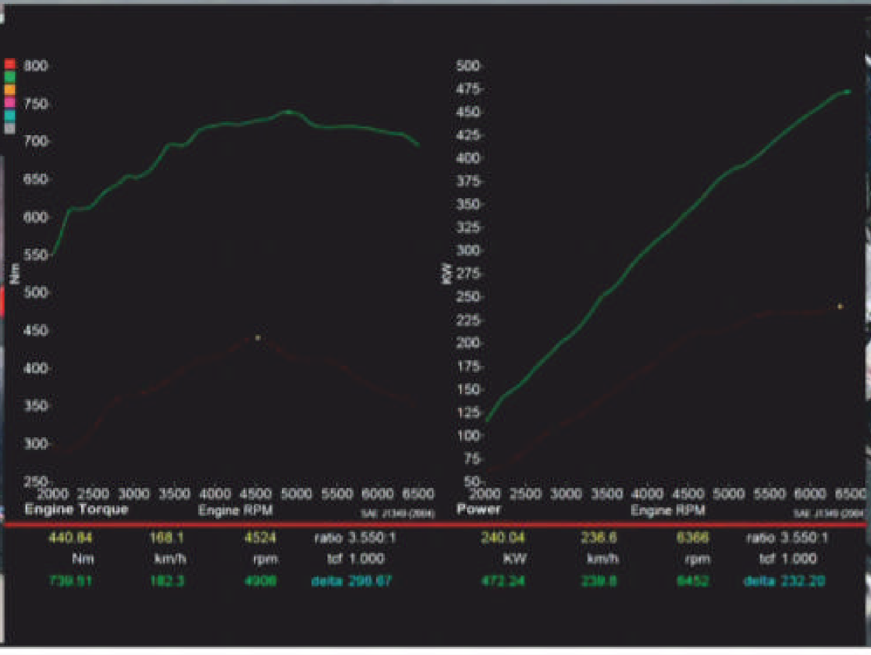

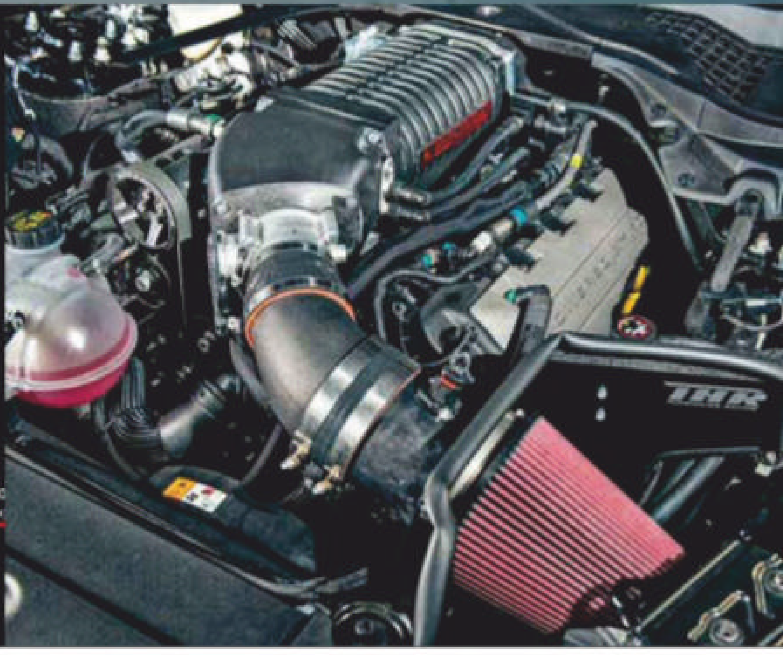

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